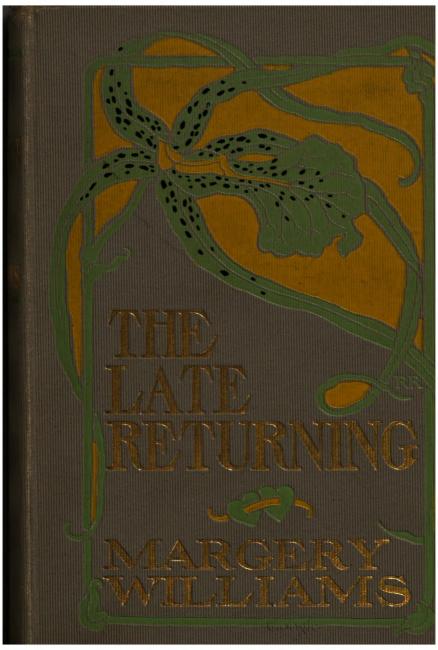
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The Late Returning

BY

MARGERY WILLIAMS

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The Late Returning

CHAPTER I

"An' come round 'ere, they did, eleven o'clock Friday night, an' woke us all up to tell us to illoominate. An' the Consul. 'e went out 'ere on the balcony an' talked to 'em. I did wisht it 'ad 'a bin me. onct. I'd 'ave illoominated 'em! I'd 'ave talked to 'em proper! They'd 'ave wanted a peace treaty by the time I got through. loominate?' I'd 'ave said — 'illoominate? Oh, go 'ome!' I'd 'ave said - 'go 'ome; yer fair myke me sick!' A silly set of rotters, as don't know what they are cheerin' about 'alf the time! If I'd 'a bin the Consul, I'd 'ave said somethin' to 'em; I'd 'ave given 'em fits. Silly rotters! 'Ark to 'em now! You might think they'd got 'olt of something to be 'appy about, mightn't you?"

The babel of voices seemed to ebb and swell in steady rhythm, sweeping from street to street of the lantern-blazoned city. Now and then a single prolonged cheer was prominent above the rest. Tin horns blared joyously amid the jostling and trampling of feet. The sky stretched invisible beyond the reflected glare. Telegraph fixtures and the tops of buildings were flung into lurid and grotesque relief, as though lit up by a huge magnesium light.

Stuggers leaned over the back gate to crane his neck towards the adjacent thoroughfare.

"'Ark to 'em!" he said again. "Rotters!" Upstairs, on the balcony overlooking the little public square, the Consul poured himself placidly another cup of coffee.

"What I like about these people," he observed, "what I particularly like, is their beautiful impartiality. Now, I haven't a thing to do with their own Government, but if I was to stand up there near the rail and take off my hat to them and bow,

they'd cheer me with all the will in the world."

- "Why don't you try it?" said Carter.
- "I would have, fifteen years ago," the Consul replied. "I have not now sufficient imagination left to make it worth while. It wants imagination properly to enjoy anything like that."

The journalist's linen suit loomed big in the dusk as he leaned back in the wicker chair. He held his empty coffee-cup upon his knee, and was gazing out beyond the stone balustrade draped with the American flag to where, in the centre of the square, a fountain flashed coolly under electric lights. When the crowd momentarily parted, one could get a glimpse of four small stone lions set at opposite corners of the fountain basin, who surveyed the scene with a complete tranquillity. The surging press of humanity affected them as little as did the occasional wind-flung drops from the spray above them.

"If I were down there in that crowd," Carter reflected, "those lions would irritate

me; I should want to smack their heads. They have a way of staring — Did you see that fat man nearly sit down in the water? Someone shoved him. I wish they'd do it again. Do you know what's struck me ever since I've been over here, Mr. Landon? There always seems such a lack of permanency about these people—a sort of absence of any definite purpose. You've noticed what I mean? They are just—there, like that." He put his hand out and tilted it from side to side. "They live in the moment."

The Consul, who had been eighteen years in the country, knocked the ash from his cigar.

"Oh, they aren't really such a bad set," he replied. "Of course, they would strike you that way, but they aren't so bad. They're a regular conglomeration, of course. Well, so're we, come right down to it. If there was just a little more of the Teutonic element, now—something to sort of—sort of—"

"Yes, yes! That's just where it is -

no solidity. Look at 'em round that fountain, will you? Oh, one of you'll do it one of these times!"

"And yet," the Consul mused, "they're absolutely the kindest-hearted and the simplest-minded — I tell you I'd trust myself blindfold in the thickest crush of them and never get hurt. They're just like that - like children. Of course, I'm not speaking of the emigrant section. But even they, after a while — Well, I suppose it's all traceable to climatic influence." He smiled suddenly. "Do you know Stuggers's view of it? He's got the profoundest contempt for the people here that ever you saw. He said to-night, when we were at dinner: 'You'll excuse me, sir, but whenever I 'ear them carryin' on out there it mykes me wanter laugh!' Stuggers's laugh is a degree more imposing than Stuggers in a merely serious mood."

"Oh, I've got any amount of respect for Stuggers!" Carter laughed. "Whenever I think of any possible future collapse of nature, I always picture Stuggers seated

serenely on the ruins. Now Stuggers is permanent—he gives you the impression of it, anyway. He's lifted above the turmoil of human things, Stuggers is. Did it ever occur to you that there must be a kind of predestination with regard to names?"

The Consul was looking beyond the shifting mob of black, scattered with flags and tricolour streamers, to the revealed heads of the calm little lions. Carter followed his gaze.

"And the stone lions," he added. "Stuggers and those lions are going to survive the dissolution of all lesser things. Mr. Landon, didn't you think there was something rather funny about the way that treaty was announced? There weren't any particulars given. That struck me right off."

"The President doesn't return till tomorrow," said the Consul, irrelevantly.

" I know," Carter returned.

They lapsed into a silence. Once the young man glanced half expectantly toward

his companion, but the Consul's face was purely contemplative. They gazed down at the little riotous square. There was a step on the sill of the French window behind them. Carter sprang to his feet.

"There's a chair right here, Mrs. Landon!" he exclaimed.

The Consul's wife smiled, standing in the opened half of the window.

"No, thanks," she said; "it's a bit quieter indoors. How you men can sit there and not go crazy I don't understand. You can't have any nerves at all. Has Mr. Landon been inflicting more of his roses upon you?"

The Consul began: -

- " I never—"
- "We've been discussing Stuggers," Carter said—"Stuggers as opposed to the light-mindedness of the present generation. Mrs. Landon, you know you're half inclined to take this chair."
- "Indeed I'm not! So the public spirit has not affected you very seriously, Mr. Carter?"

The young man said: -

"Oh, wait till I once get fairly started. It hasn't got a good grip on me yet. Mr. Landon, if I get run in for breaking street lamps, will you come to my assistance?"

"Not an inch," Landon assured him cheerfully. "Not a step."

"I ought to come under your jurisdiction, so to speak. You're my Consul, anyway; you can't get away from that. What's the matter with you being responsible to the United States for my personal safety?"

"Everything."

"Mrs. Landon, I appeal to you: did the Government appoint your husband to this post solely for the cultivation of roses?"

"That is a question I have often asked myself," replied Mrs. Landon. "Personally—"

"If I hadn't some definite aim in life," the Consul said, "I should rust worse than I'm rusting now, which is saying a good deal. As it is, I'm content to live outside the whirl of things, and grow roses undis-

turbed. When a man once gets past the meridian —"

"When he gets talking about the meridian," said Mrs. Landon, "he is worse than when he talks about roses."

The Consul sighed resignedly. "There is so little to do here," he said, when his wife had disappeared into the room. "One gets groovy unconsciously. I never used to imagine myself as settling down into this sort of thing. I used firmly to believe I would die if I didn't get a New York paper the same day it was published. Here we have them ten days old. It is demoralising."

"Rose-growing is demoralising?" Carter asked. He spoke absent-mindedly, his eyes riveted upon an open carriage which was steering a careful course along the thronged street which formed one side of the square. It held a girl and a man in uniform. The girl was leaning forward, watching the crowd, a half-opened fan held between her hands. She was in white, with a black hat that shadowed her face

effectively. The crowd good-humouredly gave way before the nervously stepping horses, and before the Consul could frame a reply the carriage had come to a pause almost under the balcony.

"There is Severin now," said the Consul, "with Miss Rome."

Carter did not at once get up, and the Consul was the first to lean over the balustrade. The girl tilted her head to smile up at them, and as she did so the electric light flashed on a diamond pin at her throat. She had wonderful pale gold hair that toned to green in the shadows, like old brass.

Severin tried to make his voice heard above the confusion.

"We have come, Mr. Landon," he said, "to relieve you from the burden of Carter. Carter, descend! Don't hesitate to express your gratitude, Mr. Landon!"

"Oh, he's behaved splendidly!" the Consul returned; "I assure you he has!"

"Then we evidently arrived just in the nick of time."

Carter was leisurely descending the vine-wreathed iron staircase which led to the balcony. He paused on the bottom step to say:—

"If you'd come along, Mr. Landon, I might behave well the rest of the time."

"I'm too old for sight-seeing," said the Consul. "I should be a wet-blanket upon the festivities."

"Come for a little way," Severin called.

The Consul glanced at the square and back at the carriage again. He seemed to be debating with himself.

"Oh, come on!" Carter urged.

The girl, who had been moving her skirts to make room for the journalist upon the seat beside her, looked up.

"Mr. Landon," she said, speaking for the first time, "I wish you would come. Will you come if we all say please?"

A voice just inside the window said:—
"Harry!"

"Just coming," the Consul replied. His air of debate had abruptly vanished.

"No, I shall remain here on the balcony and moralise; I got enough of crowds last night."

"We'll return you unharmed," Miss Rome promised. "No? Well, good evening, Mr. Landon."

"Good night!" Landon called down. The carriage started off.

"Harry," said the Consul's wife, when he finally drifted apologetically into the room, "if I hadn't spoken, you'd have gone off with that lot." She delivered it at him in a fact-like way.

"Why, no, I wouldn't." The Consul defended himself uneasily. "Of course, they asked me, but they didn't want me. They knew all along I wouldn't go."

Mrs. Landon was writing a letter. She turned the sheet over and blotted it before she said:—

- "I don't think that was a very nice thing in Carter."
 - "What wasn't?"
 - " Having her call round here for him."
 - "He didn't," the Consul feebly objected.

"He just told them to pick him up in the square."

"Well, he might have met them on the pavement, then. Anyway, it wasn't nice of him."

"I don't suppose he thinks of everything," the Consul replied. "He's very young."

"He's not so young as all that. You'd have known better than to do a thing of that sort even at his age."

The Consul smiled at her.

"But, then," he said, "you will remember that I had exceptional advantages."

CHAPTER II

THE carriage turned the corner of the square.

- " I do think the Consul's such a dear!" Miss Rome exclaimed.
- "Was that why you wanted him to come out with us?" asked Carter, looking at her.

Miss Rome addressed Severin.

- "And the way he loves his roses! He's got fifty-seven different kinds there. He told me once. And he's so simple and kindly! They say a tramp can tell him any kind of tale, and he'll believe it, every word. Look at that man with the thing in his hat!"
- "I have always thought," Severin said, keeping one eye on the manœuvres of the crowd, "that the way Stuggers sums up the Consulate menage is sublime. Do you notice that he always speaks of Missis and

the Consul? I call it a stroke of descriptive genius."

"Oh, I don't think that," said the girl.
"I don't believe it's a bit that way. It's only just that Mr. Landon is so sweet he'd give in to anyone."

Carter lit a cigarette.

"Do you like Mrs. Landon?"

"Very much," replied Miss Rome. She flashed a glance at him which was in measure defiant, and which Severin intercepted, for he said:—

"What's the matter with Carter, to-night?"

"Oh, nothing!" the girl answered.

She fell to watching the crowd again, her chin propped on her hand.

"I am trying to realise the precise attraction of middle-aged men who grow roses," said Carter. "My brain at present refuses to cope with it."

The carriage was making its way along an asphalted street. They were in front of a house festooned with electric bulbs of the green, white, and red which formed

the national tricolour. The reflected blaze lit up the girl's face and hair with gleams of vagrant colour as they passed. On the side-walk before the house a packed throng of people jostled eagerly, staring up at the display. They pressed heedlessly about the carriage. A flag carried by a portly old gentleman in a buff waistcoat all but swept Miss Rome's face as he turned in sudden apprehension of the carriage-wheel going over his toes, and she dodged her head to avoid it.

Now and again the crowd lurched under the wave of some sidewise movement. There was a continual swaying of heads. Men put their hands on other men's shoulders to force a passage, and the throng became speedily intersected in conflicting directions by little rough wedges of people charging determinedly through. Sometimes two of these bands met; the crowd wavered, closed together, became suddenly solid, and a tremor of panic set in. Tall men joked confidently over the heads of others less fortunate, and women, gripped

in the vise of pushing shoulders, turned white and clung desperately to adjacent arms. One man, leaning back rigidly to maintain breathing-space for a girl who carried a baby, kept up a ceaseless appeal: "Oh, don't push! don't push! It's all right. My God! don't push!" His voice quavered in hopeless earnestness. Someone cried, "Now we're moving!" The crowd gave way in an unforeseen direction; there was a last despairing cry and a chaotic surge of released movement. Magically the struggling shoulders became free. A gasp of relief went up. Men, flung aside into quiet corners as by the sweeping force of a current, with their clothes twisted and awry, staggered drunkenly till they could get their breath.

The next instant was another cry and another surge of heads, and the crowd had become wedged again. People shoving this way and that in their frantic efforts to escape this new terror impending succeeded in creating an independent panic that spread and multiplied. The struggle

17

was curiously local, like a scrimmage in the football field. Within ten yards of the thickest crush an old gentleman was mopping his forehead peacefully with a silk handkerchief.

Over all the coloured lamps flung a rainbow glare. Linen suits and white dresses were stained new and strange lantern-hues in which red and green predominated. It resembled a stage effect of limelight.

Here and there over the heads of the crowd arose little drifts and eddies of flung confetti. It glittered in the air like a veil of gold and silver rain. Friendly battles were waged with it between utter strangers. A young girl who had hurled a fistful at a man in bicycle dress was being chased by him round and round a lamp-post. Her dodging became presently unguarded; he caught her arm, tripping against a passerby. The next second she shrieked out in complete astonishment. A stout elderly man was trying to impress those in his immediate vicinity with the fact that his watch had been that instant stolen. From

their unconcerned attitude it seemed evident that no one believed him.

Little independent dramas began to be enacted among the elbowing mob. Carter looked up from his observance of one of these to say:—

"Getting a bit gay, isn't it?"

"Why, there are hundreds more people than there were when we started out!" Miss Rome exclaimed. "Whatever will it be like by twelve o'clock?"

The carriage, for many minutes progressing only by inches, had at last arrived at a standstill. The coachman leaned back to consult with Severin.

"He says we can't get around to the Place this way," Severin told the others; "the crowd's solid. We couldn't get the carriage through, and the horses are getting nervous already."

"Oh, hang the horses!" Carter genially cried. "Let's have a look." He stood up on Severin's seat, and peered over the coachman's shoulder.

There was more consultation between

the three, while Miss Rome watched the scene with bright eyes. Finally Carter climbed down again.

"It's just packed," he said—"simply packed. You never saw such a crowd. For ten cents I'd walk over the heads of 'em. Oh, we ought to have a flag somewhere!"

"If they once spot that American button in your lapel —" Severin began.

They could hear the driver speaking to the horses, whose hoofs clattered nervously on the asphalt. After one or two ineffectual starts the carriage turned gingerly around among the people, and set off once more at a snail's pace.

"He'll take us up that little side-street," Carter said.

Once they were out of the thoroughfare it was as though a curtain had abruptly descended and shut out the hubbub and glare. The quietness struck now on the ear as insistently as had the turmoil. Tall houses, which wore an air of self-consciousness under their trappings of home-made

illuminations, looked down gravely. The narrow side-walk was almost empty.

Carter leaned back in the carriage, and explored his pockets for another cigarette.

"Wasn't that crush on the corner great?" he said. "Oh, wasn't it? I'd have given worlds to have been in it. My Lord! did you see the man get his hat bashed in?"

"The Consul," Severin suggested, "didn't know what he missed. I can quite see him down there among the people, waving a little flag and shouting. There was one chap reminded me awfully of him."

Carter was still deep in the crowd.

"There was copy in that crush. Do you notice how a crowd always is perfectly still for just one second before it closes up—sort of getting its breath for a shove? That's the dramatic moment. You always feel it, and you know what's coming and get braced ready. I was watching them then. It happens every time."

"Literary men," said Miss Rome,

"always get into such a cold-blooded way of looking at things. It's as though they sat up at a window and looked at it all that way."

"Carter," said Severin, "did you hear? She called you a literary man."

"Oh, I heard," Carter replied.

"I wasn't meaning him in particular," said Miss Rome. "I meant men who wrote generally — journalists and reporters and people."

"You'll never make it any better," Severin told her, "so why should you go on making it worse?"

At the end of quite a long reverie Carter announced:—

"I'm getting a grip on it at last. Men — middle-aged men — who grow roses —"
Severin looked despairing.

"Our friend continues to harp on one string. He resembles a child with a tin trumpet."

"A trumpet hasn't got strings, you ass!" Carter retorted. "Ah, but you should hear Heffernan." He settled him-

22

self comfortably in his corner. "Heff is the man for the accumulation of copy. Now, if Heffernan—"

He stopped short.

" Well?"

"If Heffernan, now, were to take to musing on the attractions of the pastoral—"

"I shouldn't have supposed," Miss Rome interrupted, "that editors of daily papers got much time for musing."

"That's just what I say."

They passed presently under a lantern set in an archway. Carter turned his head and negligently viewed the girl.

"You've got a whole lot of confettistuck in your hair," he said. As she lifted her hand he added: "By the way, I saw Hilary Rainer on the street a while ago."

"Oh, did you?" said Miss Rome, indifferently.

He was watching her face.

"Yes; on the street."

Severin had been engaged in interpret-

ing the twists of the carriage. He turned around now to say:—

"He's going to take us all the way around and cut in at the back of the Post Office. The crowd won't be nearly so thick just there."

"Why don't you leave that confetti in your hair?" Carter was saying to the girl; "it suits you."

CHAPTER III

The while Heffernan dragged Carter, figuratively speaking, from the seat of the carriage, he was full of good-humoured apology. He was inclined to make a joke of this unexpected capture of his subordinate. "An editor," he explained to Miss Rome, "is a man of permitted whims. He has a habit of instantaneously wanting things." And Severin had rejoined, "Well, better be wanted by an editor than a policeman."

But when they reached the kerb Carter turned to him at once.

"Well?" he said.

Heffernan gripped his arm.

"Come along out of here, and I'll tell you."

There was a suppressed excitement then in his face which Carter's reflected anticipantly. They determinedly pushed their way through the crowd, which had grown

noisier as the evening advanced. When they reached the building where the *Press* office was, Carter was breathless from continued dodging.

Heffernan stumbled on the lower step of the stairway, and caught himself up again. His private room was at the back of the building. When they were inside he shut the door, and leaned back against it to gasp.

Carter had flung himself upon the desk and taken out his handkerchief.

"Well," he said once more, "what's the tip?"

Heffernan fairly hurled it at him. His voice sounded hoarse from haste.

"Man, they've ceded Marainz to the Spanish!"

Carter stopped swinging his legs.

"The hell they have! Where'd you get it? Oh, it's a bluff!"

"It's no bluff at all; it's God's own truth. I got it from Garaud. It's broke him up. He didn't even know he was telling me."

"I knew they were keeping something back. Didn't I tell you there was something squiffy about that announcement right from the first? My Lord! I'm seeing scareheads for to-morrow!"

"Scareheads?" Heffernan locked the door, and came over and sat down on a chair. His face was tense with excitement. "Good God! man, you don't seem to realize the size of the affair! Do you know what this is going to do? It's going to turn everything upside down. We're on the brink of a revolution. Do you grasp it? And you sit there swinging your legs and talking about scareheads!"

"Oh, there won't be any revolution. There'll be a row, though — by Heaven! there will be a row. I've just thought of it. Heff, you're right: we'll see some real street-fighting."

"It's broke Garaud up. He could hardly talk. It's as good as out already. They can't keep the treaty terms back after tomorrow. And then how's the crowd going to take it? Why, it was a fool's trick ever

holding it back at all. I believe it was pure funk. It's just made things worse. Look at all this to-night, and then to-morrow—I tell you—"

"If it's as good as out already," said Carter, "I wouldn't wonder if the Consul didn't know something about it. I was there this evening. I bet you anything he had an idea of it. I tried to get him on, and he shied. He's a deep old bird. But I wouldn't wonder if he knew."

This seemed to remind Heffernan of something. He exclaimed:—

"Why, you were driving with Severin all the evening, weren't you?"

"He wouldn't let on. He'd let the walls of the Presidency fall in on him before he'd open his mouth. That's the devil of these newly appointed men; they've got no perspective."

"Well, he'll have a chance of learning some now," Heffernan mused.

"He'll learn more than perspective. It strikes me the whole chute of us will be by way of learning something before we

get through. Say, this'll give Rainer his chance."

"Rainer? He'll be at the head of the insurrectionist party."

"You talk about the insurrectionist party as if it were a fixed thing," said Carter.

Heffernan dragged him by the arm.

"Come over and listen to those fools."

They pushed the window up, and leaned far out over the sill. The babel of cheering thrilled on the warm night air. On the other side of the city some desultory rockets cleft the dark, velvet sky.

"Listen to them," said Carter. "Heff, I feel like Stuggers, the Consul's man. He says: 'Whenever I hear them carryin' on out there it makes me wanter laugh!' Heff, doesn't this strike you as hugely funny?"

"Listen!" said Heffernan, irritably—
"listen! That's from round by the Presidency."

"Don't you want to rush out and yell it at them? My Lord! Oh, you silly, silly fools!"

After a period of thinking Carter said: "Suppose it is all a bluff? Hm?"

"Oh, but it isn't!" Heffernan persisted.

They hung out farther, and tried to catch a glimpse of the adjoining street. Viewed with their knowledge, the revelry assumed the proportions of a huge practical joke, a tragic buffoonery. There was a grimness underlying the merriment.

Carter was reminded by nothing at all of the confetti in Miss Rome's hair.

- "Heff," he said, as they stared down side by side, "I've nearly concluded my theory about Vanda Rome."
 - " What about her?"
- "She does it tremendously well; but she can't keep it up all the time. Isn't it funny how it works out in a woman so much quicker than in a man?"
 - "What does?"
 - "Birth. Now, to-night —"
- "Hang Vanda Rome!" cried Heffernan; "I'm thinking of the affairs of the State."

Carter's mouth curved. "I thought,"

he said, "that Miss Rome was generally acknowledged to be—an affair of State."

But Heffernan was at that moment incapable of seeing a joke, even if it had hit him. He was biting his lip nervously.

- "The President comes back to-morrow."
- "That is a question."
- "You mean he mightn't? But he will. There's only one thing Vallier isn't, and that's a coward. He'll be here."
- "Then he'll be mobbed. They'll go for him, sure."

There was a knock at the door. Heffernan turned around jerkily.

- "Oh, damn!"
- "It's locked," said Carter. As Heffernan crossed the floor to open it he added, "Say, Heff, I wouldn't wonder if those stone lions sat up all right tomorrow."

CHAPTER IV

CARTER, turning round, exclaimed nervously:—

"Oh, my goodness! Look at that gas!"
He walked over to the jet, burning pallidly under the morning sunlight, and turned it off. Then he came back to where Heffernan was leaning over the window-sill.

"Let's go out and get some breakfast," said Heffernan. He seemed with the daylight to have assumed an air of philosophy. "Nothing will ever happen if we sit around waiting for it."

He picked his hat up off the desk and started downstairs. Out on the side-walk Carter looked at his watch.

"Why, it's barely after five now," he said.

There was only one café in the city
32

which could conceivably be open at that hour, and they bent their steps tacitly toward it. The streets were quite peaceful. Their aspect of everyday placidity struck Carter as simply appalling. He couldn't get over it. He tried to discover some trace of dramatic expectancy on the faces of such passers-by as they encountered, but they seemed to be merely going stolidly about their business. A mule hitched to a milk-wagon drowsed serenely on the corner.

While they waited for their coffee he said to Heffernan:—

"Heff, did you ever see a play called 'Drink'? There's a scene in it where a chap's climbing a rotten scaffold. He starts to go up it, and of course the audience knows it isn't safe, and they know all the time he's going to fall, and there he keeps on going a step higher, and a step higher, and then stopping to joke, and then going another step higher, and you sort of want to yell out at him every minute. I feel now just like I did when I was watching that.

D

When do you say this affair's timed to come off, anyway?"

- "I give them twelve hours," said Heffernan, sagely.
- "I bet you what you like it doesn't come off at all. Something'll happen. It's not too late now."
 - "Oh, it'll come off," Heffernan declared.
 - "Will you put five dollars on it?"
 - "Yes."

Carter searched in his breast-pocket for an old envelope.

"Good! Twelve hours from now. That brings it to 5.15 this afternoon. Call it half after. Very well, then."

He took out a fountain pen, and, shaking it over the floor, began to write. Heffernan tilted his chair forward to look on.

"In the event of a public insurrection taking place in this city before the hour of 5.30 p.m. to-day, July 11, I, Edward Carter, undertake to pay J. Heffernan sum of five dollars State currency."

"Make it ten," said Heffernan, reading. Carter altered the amount silently.

"You're a methodical beast!"

Carter gazed toward the doorway framing a vista of sunlit street.

"We've time to be methodical in."

"Oh, you wait and see!" returned Heffernan, deeply — "you wait and see!"

In the intervals of drinking abominable coffee, Carter employed himself in sketching the waiter, somnolent in the background, upon the envelope that held the record of their wager. When he tried to shade the face in, his pen caused blots which annoyed him, and he finally scribbled the sketch over and thrust the envelope back into his pocket. He wrote his name in ink on the stained marble top of the table, and, licking his finger, wiped it off again.

Heffernan, to judge from his face, was engaged in violent thinking. Fragments of these thoughts he cast at Carter from time to time disconnectedly.

"You see," he said once, "they were tremendously opposed to his dragging them into this war in the first place, and

35

now ten thousand devils will be nothing to them once they find out they've lost Marainz by it. You see—"

"Oh, my Lord!" said Carter.

His fountain pen had rebelled suddenly, and spilled ink over his trousers.

"I shall write it all up and send it in to the New York Journal," he remarked. He returned the pen to his pocket, and sat with his elbows on the table. "It will make a fancy story. 'It was a perfect day in early July. No hint of impending tragedy—'"

"You're beginning to get rattled, my boy," said Heffernan, regarding him across the table.

"Yes, a lot. Your ten thousand devil —"

"Want your ten dollars back?"

"You haven't got it yet."

"All the same," Heffernan persisted, "you're about to get rattled."

"I'm not," Carter retorted; "I merely feel like pushing events. They don't move quick enough. Say, I believe I'll go round by the Consulate going back. I forgot,

though; he won't be up. Or does he get up early to weed his roses?"

"I dunno."

"Stuggers will be up, anyhow. I'll see Stuggers. A crisis like this demands the companionship of persons who are not nervous, and, you know, Heff, you're frightfully nervous. You're shaking with anticipant dread. You—"

Heffernan made a good-humoured rush at him, and butted him out through the narrow doorway.

The mule attached to the milk-waggon had progressed as far as another corner. Heffernan was taking personal views of the affair.

"Of course," he said, "those damned printers will regard this as another legal occasion for getting drunk and knocking off work."

He was slightly cheered up to perceive, as they neared the office, the small gay delivery cart, which was the treasure of his soul, standing outside the entrance. One of the "damned printers," attired

chiefly in pink shirt-sleeves, was assisting to pile it with stacked papers damp from the press. A poster was displayed over the tail-board. On it was printed in staring capitals: "Official. Full terms of the treaty. Marainz ceded to the Spanish."

CHAPTER V

CARTER interrupted the Consul at an early breakfast. Mrs. Landon was not yet down, and the Consul sat with a horticultural journal propped open against the cream-jug, eating melon with a spoon. He said to Carter:—

"Sit down; I know exactly what you're going to tell me, but there isn't a thing in it—not one thing. Sit down and have some breakfast."

"How do you know?" Carter demanded.

"I know because I've seen it dozens of times before. It never gets beyond a little excited feeling. The people here resemble children. They love nothing better than to march around with guns on their shoulders, and shouting. If you were to deprive them of the privilege of marching ound with a gun and shouting," the Consul con-

tinued, scooping his melon calmly, "you would be curtailing their chief public amusement. It is a national game. It's cheaper than base-ball and they enjoy it more."

"Well, that's one way of looking at it," Carter said.

"It is the only way. My dear boy, when you have lived in this country as long as I have you will take the same view. I used to take it all seriously. Nowadays, when I hear a thing like this, what do I do? Do I go flying off to Mrs. Landon and say, 'Mrs. Landon, pack your trunk right off; there's going to be a revolution'? No, I simply lock my front door, and go out and prune my roses. Nothing ever happens. It's all bluff."

"Well, Heffernan - "

"Heffernan has not yet passed the meridian," said the Consul.

"Oh, I don't believe in it!" Carter hastily exclaimed — "I don't believe in it for a minute. Why, I've got a bet on with Heff now. He says he gives 'em till five o'clock.

I've got ten dollars on it. That doesn't look much like counting on its coming off, does it?"

His anxiety to impress the Consul with his entire disbelief in the affair passed unheeded.

"They're really a most simple-minded people," said Mr. Landon, "when you once get to know them—most simple. Did Miss Rome enjoy the illuminations last night?"

Carter smiled. He was wondering how the Consul accounted in his own mind for the connection between Miss Rome and simple-mindedness.

"Oh, we didn't get run in for windowbreaking quite. It was a bit thick out, though."

"I stayed out here on the balcony till quite late, smoking," the Consul said. "The crowd seemed very happy. I like to see a whole lot of people enjoying themselves — from a distance," he added — "from a distance."

Carter asked abruptly: -

"Mr. Landon, what sort of a stand do you think Rainer will take?"

"Hilary Rainer? He won't take any. Let me disabuse your mind of one idea, young man." The Consul tapped the table-cloth with his finger. "Hilary Rainer hasn't got any more pull over the people than — than I have. It's nothing but talk. Rainer? Why, I knew Rainer when he wore short breeches and went barefoot! He's come into the garden here and cut my grass for me."

"He is quite from—the people, isn't he?"

"I should say so—certainly I should say so."

Carter sat swinging his straw hat between his fingers.

"I've been in this country eighteen years," said the Consul, after a pause, "and in this city twelve. I've watched everyone grow up. People can do a lot of growing up in twelve years."

"And in more ways than one," Carter ventured.

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"In more ways than one," said the Consul.

He was looking out through the open window at the grass which Hilary Rainer used to cut before he formulated views on the salvation of his country. Carter, watching him, wondered of whom in particular the Consul was then thinking. But he said nothing, and after a minute Carter rose.

"I must be going back to the office," he said; "they're all in a mix there. It's been a big thing for the *Press*, you know."

"And you won't have any breakfast? Well, don't go running away with dreams of a revolution or anything," said the Consul, "because I know these children with their tin trumpets and their pop-guns. Nothing will happen at all."

The heat of the day was beginning as Carter crossed the square past the imperturbable little stone lions. He tucked his handkerchief inside his collar as he walked. Turning a corner hurriedly, he all but collided with a group of men who were excitedly talking.

CHAPTER VI

THERE was no shade along the road, which stretched hot and white, narrowing in perspective, to the little white-walled town. Viewed from this point, the town itself had all the effect of a Maxfield Parrish background. The collection of huddled roofs, red and orange under the sunshine, seemed to bask at the end of a long ribbon. Here and there a patch of vivid green broke the white glare of stucco. To the right of one of these patches the cupola of the Presidency cut like ivory against a sky which resembled the sky in those coloured photographs which hang framed in tourist booking-offices. Its intensity seemed to have been produced by chemical means. Seen in a painting it would have looked rampantly unnatural. One squareangled building, planted about with peace-

ful trees, stood out more noticeably clean and spotless than the others, with small black windows set infrequently in its plaster walls. This was the State prison. From a flag-staff, mounted at one corner, a tiny jewelled flag hung motionless.

To Carter the city always suggested ridiculously a toy village set out on a table-cloth. It appeared to him as if someone might at any moment remove the Presidency between their finger and thumb to an opposite corner, or by an inadvertent movement spill the public offices into one of the tiny squares. He often tried to picture the attitudes of the people under such a catastrophe.

He sat contemplating it now, the while he fanned himself with his straw hat. The place looked more toy-like than ever, and he was reminded of the Consul's parting words about the children's pop-guns. There was a mirage-like quality about the distant roofs which lent a further unreality. When he looked at the road along which he had come, it seemed to

quiver and undulate with the heat, swimming before his eyes like a landscape seen through steam.

He turned his head several times to glance along the opposite stretch of road. Presently there came from this direction the sound of light hoofs. Carter put a hand to his hair, and wondered whether his face were as grimy as it felt. He had walked quickly from the town. The hoofbeats drew nearer, and through the dust of their coming he recognised the gray horse and the little yellow-wheeled carriage. He got up from his seat by the road edge and moved forward.

The carriage pulled up within a few yards of him. As the grating of wheels ceased Vanda Rome exclaimed:—

"Why, good morning, Mr. Carter!"

She looked cool and white and fresh under the fluffy parasol. A spray of blood-coloured cactus-blossom was fastened in the silver clasp of her belt. She waited while Carter came up.

"I'm just going into the town," she

cried then. "Don't you want me to give you a lift?"

- "Why, if you will," Carter said.
- "Get in."

He climbed in, and seated himself in the corner furthest removed from her dainty ruffled skirts, disposing his dust-covered boots as far out of sight as he could. She watched him with a smile.

- "And so what was the tremendous piece of business that called you away from us last night?"
- "How did you know it was tremendous?" he fenced.
- "Nothing less would fetch Mr. Heffernan running bareheaded through the streets to find you. Oh, he contrived it most unsuspiciously. But what was it?"
 - "This Marainz business chiefly."
 - " Ah!"
- "You knew it beforehand," he said, looking at her.

Vanda twisted her parasol round on her shoulder.

47

"Well, if I did," she provokingly de-

manded, "you can't say I didn't keep it very well."

"Some things," said Carter, "you can keep perfectly."

The girl bit her lip.

"The Press was very quick."

"Oh, it had got beyond a question of keeping, then. A thing of that size simply can't be kept. And it would have been a long way better if they'd never tried to hold it at all. I suppose you've seen the *Press*, then?"

"Yes."

"I feel very dishevelled," said Carter, presently, gazing at his boots. "I'm about as appropriate, sitting here, as a travelling bear. I ought to have asked whether you minded dust."

"I suppose you were up awfully early?" Vanda said.

"Up?" he laughed. "Why, I haven't been to bed all night. I don't suppose half a dozen people in the city have."

They drove a little way in silence. Carter was studying the silver clasp at

her waist. Once he cleared his voice in a preliminary sort of way, and she glanced across at him. But it was not until a minute or two later that he said:—

- "There's a tremendous crowd in the city."
- " I suppose so," Vanda replied.

"The announcement was given out officially at nine, but we'd had the news out before then - by about six - and the cart that took the papers round was mobbed simply mobbed. It had one of these big posters hanging out over the tail-board, and the driver had to turn up a side alley and take it off. The people wouldn't let the cart through. He said he had an awful time getting round. Steve, it was," he added, almost as if he supposed it possible that she would know whom he meant. But he recollected himself in time to supplement: "The man that does most of our outside work. It would take quite a lot to floor him, too. We consider him rather a character down at the office."

"Is there much of a crowd now?" Vanda asked.

"Much of a crowd? Why, if you — Well, I tell you it took just about as much as I could do to get through them, coming along."

"Why, then that'll be splendid!" the girl said. "I do love anything exciting to look at."

She had a most finished way of taking people aback. Carter looked down at his boots again. When he lifted his head it was to say:—

"Miss Rome, is it absolutely necessary for you to go into the town this morning?"

" Why?"

"Because if I were you I wouldn't go. I tell you," he continued, "you simply haven't any idea of what the streets are like. It's nothing but a mob. It's the roughest gang I ever was in in my life, and I've been in a tidy few. It — it isn't safe for a woman."

"You mean that it wouldn't be particularly safe for me?"

"Since you put it that way," Carter

returned, regarding her squarely, "it would be particularly not safe for you."

She drew herself together proudly in her corner of the carriage.

- "Thank you," she said.
- "You might remember that you gave me no choice."

Vanda asked: -

- "Did you come all the way out here just to tell me this?"
 - " I did."
- "Then you might have saved yourself the trouble," she said.
- "That possibility," replied Carter, "did not occur to me. It does not occur to me now."
- "Did you for a moment suppose that I should turn around and go back again?"
- "No!" Carter almost shouted; "I never in the world gave you credit for having a quarter so much common-sense! All the same, I predict that you'll run a pretty fair chance of regretting it if you don't. Oh, of course I can't make you," he finished, "and I shan't try. I merely advise you to do so."

The girl leaned back, and watched him musingly from under the edge of her para-More than once she had made an attempt at defining his exact attitude toward her. That he had absolutely no personal respect for her she perfectly knew. What she comprehended less easily, and yet liked the most in him, was his instinctive and fundamental respect which regarded sex only and took no heed to individuals. To her countrymen it would have been a most novel idea to respect a woman merely because she was a woman. In the first hour of their acquaintanceship Vanda had realised this tradition to be as distinctly a part of Carter's nationality as was his speech, and that he was equally unconscious of both. It was a tradition inherited by him through long generations. It seemed to permit him, nevertheless, to say things to her which, coming from other men, she would have resented imperiously. It was as though this boy, fresh from his American college, had brought to her understanding a knowledge

based upon the wisdom of all the centuries. Vanda wondered sometimes why she did not entirely hate him for it.

She was aroused from her reverie by Carter's voice.

"Well, do you intend to go back?" he asked.

"No!" cried Vanda -- "no!"

"Very well, then," said Carter. He took a little silver case from his pocket and chose a cigarette.

They were nearing the town. The open fields gave place to villas set back behind lawns gay with flower-beds. Drawn sunblinds gave a sleepy look to the house-fronts. Out on one of the verandas, as they passed, some people were having late breakfast.

"The crowd," said Carter, keeping his glance upon the girl's face, "seem to be preparing an open-armed welcome for the President. It is quite probable that he will have an exciting time getting up from the depot. He arrives at eleven, I believe?"

53

"The 11.20."

" Perhaps — " Carter began.

Vanda turned upon him.

"Mr. Carter," she said, "there isn't a cowardly bone in Vallier's whole body, and you know it! If he had any idea what sort of state the people were in, it would just make him come all the more. He would drive through the streets if he knew he was going to be shot at every minute."

"Then he'll be putting up a bigger bluff than I give him credit for."

"If you knew Vallier you wouldn't talk that way."

"You see I have not that privilege," Carter returned.

Her eyes flashed in swift hatred of him. The match with which Carter had paused in the act of lighting his cigarette went out, and he threw it over the side of the carriage and took a new one. It spluttered, and he made a little careful cup of his hands to shield the flame.

While they were passing the first shop

in the street, which would merge presently into the principal thoroughfare, he gave her another chance.

"Do you still intend to go on?"

"Yes."

The horse's hoofs thudded suddenly upon asphalt. The wheels revolved all but noiselessly. From the street before them was borne back a curious hum which might have been the murmur of distant machinery.

"If you won't go back yourself," he asked after a pause, "will you at least send the carriage back?—and I'll take you through on foot. The street-cars are running still."

"Do you think I am afraid of those people?" she demanded contemptuously.

Carter ignored the taunt.

"You may think you're doing a fine thing in doing this," he said, "but you aren't. You are simply being headstrong and ridiculous, and you'll find you are showing off to an empty house."

The confused hum of the crowd became more imminent. There was in it a certain quality as of purpose, almost of menace, a

vibrant undertone distinguishing it utterly from the murmur of the night before. It was less a tumult than a rumble, ominous in its restraint. There are in nature a few sounds which, heard for the first time by strange ears, compel an instant and primitive recognition. One of these is the voice of an angered mob. Carter, listening, felt his nerves stirred by a responsive thrill which was half of anticipation, half of presage. He looked at the face of the girl sitting opposite him, and saw her gazing unconcernedly at the coachman's shoulders. He looked at her hands, and detected her fingers tightening upon the handle of the parasol. He smiled.

Of a sudden, turning a corner, they were in the thick of it.

The elbowing mass of people had overflowed the side-walks, and were pushing each other this way and that down the centre of the street. The field of vision was continually altering, yet maintained an odd permanency of effect. The figures shifted and wavered and changed until the

whole scene reminded Carter of nothing so much as a scene viewed through the biograph. Almost he expected to see it grow hazy in outline, and be jerked abruptly into darkness. It struck a singular note of familiarity. Nationality is obliterated in a crowd. This jostling sea of hats might have been the hats of any other people under the sun.

The air was filled with the woven murmur of voices and the rasping of feet. A cyclist, dust-grimed and perspiring, steered slowly where the throng was thinnest, casting anxious glances to right and left, and ready at an instant's notice to dismount. The notice arrived while Carter was watching him, in a sudden surging of the crowd, and he flung himself upon his feet with deft haste, dragging the bicycle along the edge of the kerb. In his eagerness to escape being engulfed by this forward wave, he pushed his machine recklessly, hopping on one foot, and looking nervously back over his shoulder. Presently Carter lost sight of him in the press.

The pace of the carriage had decreased. The uneasiness of the big gray horse between the shafts could be read in the alternate straining and slackening of the traces. He set his feet down as if walking on slippery pavement. Where a London bushorse would have plodded stolidly, his progress, checked constantly by the crowd, expressed a growing hesitation.

Carter's attention had been for some minutes engrossed by a man on the sidewalk. He said abruptly to Miss Rome:—

"Hold your parasol lower."

The futility of the command was in his mind the instant he had spoken. But while her compliance hung still in the balance, a woman's voice rang out above the murmur of the crowd.

"Oh, by God! but we can ride in our carriage, can't we?"

Carter turned his head. The woman, a mere untidy girl, with a face still coarsely pretty, was standing in an open doorway. She held a baby in her arms, and she rubbed her cheek against its head while

she stared in insolent hatred at the passing carriage. Her pose was at once a taunt and a display.

A little ripple swept the crowd in the immediate neighbourhood; a sudden hush, then a whisper that deepened to a jeer. A man's laugh broke the tension. The girl in the doorway, looking on, hugged her baby closer, shifting him against her shoulder.

Carter caught himself up in the act of glancing at Vanda; but that second revealed her sitting slim and straight on the opposite seat, her chin a little lifted and her mouth set tightly. The beauty of her face, framed by the pale gold hair, was almost frost-like. Carter felt that she was clinging to her scorn of the people—the people from whom she had come—as a drowning sailor would cling to a spar. He wondered swiftly how far she would carry it through. Even while he wondered there was a fresh stir and movement among the mob that thronged their carriage. What followed had the rapidity of

a planned scuffle on the stage. There was a shout and a forward lurch, and something struck heavily the back panel of the carriage. The light-built vehicle quivered from the shock; the horse swerved violently to one side, and the crowd fell back with curses. Carter, half rising to his feet, was flung back against the cushions.

The horse plunged again, amid a second scattering of the people. Carter knelt on the little forward seat, with a hand gripping the coachman's shoulder to steady himself. The man was using his whip with a decision born of the situation.

"Push on!" Carter cried—"push on! Don't let 'em close in on you. Turn up that little alley to the right."

His quick eye had caught the only practicable turning.

"Go on! Oh, never mind running into 'em! We've got to get out of this."

But when he faced Vanda again he expressed nothing beyond the artistic appreciation of a row inevitable to his age and calling. His eyes held what she had once

defined as the "copy" gleam. Her own wonderful and rigid quietness through it all rendered less obvious his attempt at making light of the whole affair.

The manœuvre of the carriage took the crowd by surprise. There was a shout from the driver and a grating of the wheel against the kerb as the horse turned nervously short. In the sway and jolt of it Vanda clutched at the seat with her free hand. The next instant they were clattering up a little side alley between tall houses, which, as Carter had divined, was too narrow for the mob easily to follow.

The rocking of the carriage decreased, and the horse's hoofs settled to a steadier rhythm. They turned two more corners, and were in a little quiet back-street of the city. It was as though all tumult had been miraculously left behind. The gray horse, still breathing hard, slowed down to a walk, stretching his nose toward the ground, and the driver leaned forward to speak to him cheerfully.

There was a silence. In the midst of

it Vanda stooped and picked up a small object from the carriage floor. She held it out to Carter on the palm of her hand, smiling.

"Last night they threw confetti," she said with a shaken gaiety. "This morning they throw stones. It must be a great thing to have elastic sympathies."

As Carter displayed no intention of a remark, she added:—

"If you get out at this next corner, Mr. Carter, you will be just five minutes' walk from the *Press* office. I'm afraid that's as near as I can take you."

Carter shifted his feet.

- "Are you going on?" he asked.
- "Yes," said Vanda.
- "Very well, then." He resettled himself grimly upon the little forward seat, and prepared to relight his cigarette, which had gone out. "We had better keep straight on down here and come out behind the square."

Vanda shut her lips curiously and looked at him.

"Mr. Carter," she said at last, "you will oblige me by getting out."

"I shall oblige myself," returned Carter, immovably, "by doing nothing of the sort."

He achieved an air of absolute permanency as he spoke.

"Oh, you are hateful!" she cried.

Carter's hatefulness did not appear to worry him much. He pulled on the cigarette, sending from between his closed teeth a whirl of smoke that hung on the still air. It made an opal mist, through which the girl continued to gaze at him. Presently there came a defiant hopelessness into her regard. She bit her lip, and looked toward the waiting coachman.

"Louis," she said imperatively, "you may take the carriage back; I am going to walk."

CHAPTER VII

THERE arrived that ominous moment when the crowd seemed to pause. Carter seized upon the relaxation to brace his feet firmly, pressing back against the packed shoulders to give the girl in front of him more room.

"Keep your arms straight down by your side," he said to her — "straight down; I'll look out for you."

Even as he spoke he was pushed forward upon her, in a surge against which one man was as impotent as a chip in a current, and which swept him momentarily from his feet. There was an instant of stifled helplessness. The pressure against his chest made him gasp like a swimmer in the grip of waves. They were wedged as between solid walls. The locked crowd swayed this way and that, and above the confusion someone cried out aloud.

Carter was being thrust forward an inch

64

at a time. A little distance ahead a group of five or six men were beginning to struggle. He could see Vanda's face whiten and her eyes grow big.

"Oh, my God!" she said softly—"oh, my God!"

Carter spoke to her almost as he might have spoken to a child.

"I'll look out for you — I'll look out for you. Keep right by me."

"What we've got to do," he added a second later, smiling across an intervening shoulder, "is to look out we don't get separated. I shall hang on to you."

The man gave him directly a chance of doing this, by a side step which allowed Carter to work in front of him. He slid his arm around the girl's waist, and so could keep the worst crush a little from her. The while he braced himself against the pavement he was trying to think whether any other approach could by chance have been better than this. But the square had four minutes ago been passable. He had in no wise foreseen this

fateful closing in of the crowd. They were too deeply surrounded to get back; he had thought of that at once, but it seemed easier now simply to go on. There were shop-fronts within a few feet, but the owners had, with neat foresight, put their shutters up in the early morning to save the glass, and were themselves out in the street. Alone, Carter could have fought a way through, but Vanda at his elbow made the thing impossible. He thought swiftly how he had never seen a girl so frightened. She clung to him desperately, and her face seemed thin with fear. He could hear how she drew each breath through clenched teeth. All her imperiousness had been swept from her; she was a mere wisp of nervous dependence.

Once her clutch of his arm tightened suddenly.

"Oh, I wish I hadn't made you come," she said.

"Made me!" said Carter — "made me!"

He threw into the words some assumption of its having rather been he who had

dragged her. But it did not prevent him from all the while revolving what he did not, in his own mind, hesitate to call her cursed obstinacy. He even viciously hoped that she was enjoying it, now she had got there.

Their idea was to reach the Presidency. and by a blind chance it was toward the Presidency that the crowd was now impelling them. Propelling might be a better word for the action by which they were being pushed step by step over the unresisting pavement. Looking forward, Carter could see over the jostling heads the gilded spear-points which topped the Presidency railings and the tall, locked gates of wrought iron. In the space between a mounted policeman was moving to and fro in an endeavour to keep order among the mob, which threatened every instant to lapse into riot. As he bobbed his head the sunlight caught the brass crest upon his helmet in vivid flashes. He appeared to be trying, by his method of remonstrance, to preserve a fiction that the crowd was as

yet only good-humoured. He dealt with them after the manner of a London policeman on a day of public festivity. But to Carter his useless pushing and exhorting betrayed a haste to make the most of his authority while the public were still in a mood to recognise it. The journalist, watching, was conscious of a keen sympathy for him. He followed the manœuvres of the uniformed shoulders raised above the level of the throng with appreciation. Quite absurdly it occurred to him to wonder whether the policeman were Irish.

A small man, in a Panama hat with a black ribbon, was lifted and dragged by his friends to a position on the sculptured base of one of the lamp-posts. He began a harangue, steadying himself by one hand. Immediately there was a fresh heave and struggle in his direction. His voice was drowned in the larger voice of the crowd. From the rear arose shouts, where a banded gang of roughs were trampling and fighting savagely, shoulder to shoulder, in their determination to force

a way to the front. Heads were turned toward the tumult, and a panic swept the strained faces. A man snatched a child from a woman's arms and held it aloft from the crush. For a moment it seemed that the crowd had gone mad with fear of itself. The shouting and trampling spread, like the ripples on pebble-struck water. A red-faced mechanic, whose coat had been torn from him, was the centre of a lesser knot of conflict.

The little man in the Panama hat slid from the lamp-post like a seal into deep water. The mob swallowed him up.

"Oh, my God!" Vanda said over and over again.

Carter's arm was still around her, and he was feeling that the next surge of the crowd would wrench it from its socket. A dull burning possessed it from the wrist upward, as if he had been carrying heavy weights.

The relentless glare of the sun was all but intolerable. Carter's clothes clung to him like wet rags. They seemed, too, to

have been twisted hind-side before. His tie had climbed above his collar, and was like a string about his neck. His straw hat had been lost an hour ago, and the heat beat down upon his unprotected head. He made an effort to free one hand in order to push the damp hair from his forehead, but his arm was held down as in a vise by the pressure about him. The stray wisp of hair became speedily a torture. He made a spasmodic gesture toward his coat-sleeve, like the gesture of a horse striking at a fly. But the movement made him hotter and stickier than ever.

He set his teeth, and kept his eyes upon the gilded spear-heads of the railings, which danced up and down in a dazzle of sunlight. Using his elbows strategically he began to work a passage sidewise toward them, contesting his advance an inch at a time, and dragging Vanda with him. It was now no longer a question of moving with the crowd; they simply had to get through. Already the sun was

making his head reel. Carter was slight-built, but wiry. He had been a fair athlete in college days. Remembering now an old dodge which he had more than once employed effectually on election nights in New York, he prepared to use his body as a battering-ram, and fairly hurled himself through the people, shouldering them aside in the second of their surprised giving way. He had something the manner of an eel getting through shallow water. He forged a way instinctively where the crush seemed least, contriving a zigzag course with his eyes always toward the Presidency railings.

It was about as swift as riding on a glacier, but by degrees it appeared that the railings must be nearer. Carter all but glared at them as he skilfully battled. At one moment he believed them close; at another, they were miles removed. He moved wearily, cleaving to each fresh foothold. With the conviction that at last the railings were nearer came a magical release from resistance, and he staggered

forward, like a man bursting through thick underbrush, to just escape falling up against the policeman's big sorrel horse. In the first dishevelled instant he believed that he had left half his clothes behind him in the crush. Vanda had hold of his arm, and as he felt the sudden loosening of her hand he thought that she had fainted. But she only stood there, drawing breath dazedly.

The policeman, by ceaseless vigilance, had succeeded in maintaining a space of comparative freedom. The people fell back unwillingly enough before the tall sorrel, who was showing signs of restiveness. There is in general something sublime about the intelligence of a policeman's horse in a crowd. His attitude is in a way protective; he moves with a wonderful delicacy, velvet-footed, like a cat among old china. He understands perfectly his position and the tacit confidence placed in him, and as long as he is left alone nothing ever happens. But persistent jostling had worried the sorrel into nervous-

ness. This was a mob he in no wise understood, and by the curious telepathy which exists between horse and rider he was keenly conscious of his master's anxiety. Meaningless jerking at the reins worried him. His skin glistened with sweat; there were dark streaks and markings upon his sides and outlining the heavy saddle-cloth. Where the straps chafed was a lather of white. He continually fidgeted, sidewise, from one foot to another.

Carter had early made it a point of expedience to be on good terms with all the city police. He caught the man's eye, and the officer drew rein with a sharpness that sent the horse sheering clumsily backward upon the crowd. There was a cry from those who were being borne by the recoil against the railings, now joyously imminent. Carter seized Vanda's hand, and pulled her under the sorrel's nose toward the big gates. A vista of cool green was beyond them, and a square, white house, standing back among trees.

The moment seemed to flash their position like a projection on a screen. Their hazard was to reach the gates before the surrounding people should awake to Vanda's identity. It helped them that the girl was sufficiently unlike herself, with her fair hair disordered above her face, and her white muslin skirts soiled and torn. She bent her head, as she hurried, with a sob of relief. Carter looked back over his shoulder as they pressed forward, and saw the policeman dealing vainly with the crowd, which was closing in toward them.

"We must shove—shove," he said. "Can you make it?"

She quickened her steps. They were nearly across the cleared space, when a man made a grasp at her dress. A word spun through the air.

Carter's face flushed. He turned, and his right arm flew out swiftly from the shoulder twice. There was a shout and a menacing murmur as the upholder of public morals was helped staggering to his feet. He stood mopping his broken

mouth gingerly with his shirt-sleeve, glaring hatred from a face twisted with pain. Carter had caught sight of Severin just inside the gates, and he cried out to Vanda:—

"Run! Run!"

He followed her, tripping with his foot another man who had sprung forward. As the girl reached the gate it grated on the gravel, and she slipped through like a fluttered white moth. The next second it was closed and barred, and in the compact rush of the crowd upon it, Carter had time to dodge adroitly. He had disappeared while the policeman on the sorrel horse was still forcing a way toward the point of riot.

CHAPTER VIII

"THE crowd seemed to get thick all at once," said Vanda, "and, of course, as soon as I saw how it was I told Louis to take the carriage back—Huzoor gets so nervous at any excitement—and Carter said he'd take me through all right. And then it kept getting worse and worse, and I thought I'd better come straight here. We couldn't possibly have gone back. I never saw such a crowd in my life."

She could speak of it glibly now. The colour had come back to her face, and her fingers on the tiny Salviati liqueur-glass were all but steady. Her assurance had returned to her magically, aided by the familiar surroundings of this little costly room panelled in bronze. She had straightened her hair at the oval mirror on the wall. Its crystal depths reflected her at this moment, lounging, slim and

self-possessed, in Vallier's morocco armchair. Behind her a veranda made a background tropical with palms and maidenhair fern. Carter, looking at her, might have deduced bluntly that she had been badly frightened. But with Severin it was unnecessary to expect anything of the sort. Severin was of the accustomed order of things; she knew where she was with him implicitly.

"I see," he replied. He had managed to scrape his hand upon the gate in his rush to hold it fast against the crowd, and he removed the injured knuckle from his mouth now and regarded it musingly—"I see. Well, I sent Brand round to the villa this morning."

"I had left before he came."

"It was lucky your meeting Carter." Vanda showed some enthusiasm.

"Yes, wasn't it? He was out for a walk. I met him at the top of the road and gave him a lift. He's such a nice boy."

"He's a regular young devil!" said Sev-

erin. He was engaged in picturing again the scuffle outside the gates—"a young devil! Did you see him hit that man?"

Vanda shot a quick glance at him.

"He told me once he'd rather fight than work any day in the week. I'd rather sit still than do either."

He spoke with the ease possible to a man who at thirty carries the scars of four battles. He reached forward to one of the writing-table drawers, and finding it locked, took a cigarette from his own pocket. Vanda watched him light it, her chin propped on her hand.

"You're fidgety, Severin," she announced.

"I?" He threw his head back jerkily and laughed. "If I never have anything to make me more fidgety than I am this minute, I'd do!"

He pulled at his cigarette for some minutes in silence. There was a tenseness in the poise of his figure, flung back in the chair; he seemed to be continually listening for something.

Vanda read with swift intuition the rest78

lessness underlying his studied indolence. They talked indifferently, with frequent pauses. During one of these the girl's gaze swept to the little silver-cased clock on the writing-table.

"It is only ten after," said Severin.

"I know," she returned.

Outside, a bird, caged somewhere among the ferns, broke into a thin, sweet trill. Under the edge of the Japanese blinds, which screened the veranda, showed a strip of emerald grass. The air that entered was hot and drowsy.

"Rainer addressed a street-meeting this morning," said Severin, after a time. "I didn't hear him, but several men I know were there. There was a lot of excitement."

"I suppose so."

Severin pulled an ash-tray convenient to his hand.

"Usen't you to know Rainer pretty well years ago?" he asked, touching his cigarette against the edge.

"No, never!" said the girl.

"I had an idea you did — I don't know why. I always thought so."

Vanda waited a minute before she said:—
"It was quite a mistake."

"Oh!" said Severin. It was as though he wished to impress upon her that he was in no degree conscious of having put his foot into it. "Well, he's really personally a very decent fellow. I met him one time at the Journalists' Club, years ago, before ever he took to this rot. He always had some queer ideas. He was on the Herald two years and a half before it went to smash. I don't like these socialistic men generally; they always give you the impression that they've got some sort of a private grievance against the universe to work off. I always say, if you take to anything, take to drink; it's an older institution and twice as respectable."

He rattled on cheerfully. Vanda leaned her head back against the dark green leather. Her eyes were half closed. The little Venetian liqueur-glass on the table dealt with the light in strange gleams.

Once Severin rose and walked to the door. He stood there for some minutes, listening. When he came back again the girl said:—

"Severin, tell me: is there likely to be any trouble?"

"Trouble?" he fenced. "Trouble where? How do you mean?"

"Why, trouble," she repeated impatiently.

"Oh!" He pulled a chair forward and sat down. "Oh, I don't think that — I don't think that for an instant. I — well, I don't know exactly what I do think, but I certainly don't think that."

"Then what makes you so fidgety?" she persisted.

" Me?"

"You and Garaud and everyone. What's the matter with all those people outside?"

"Well, it's just this way." He leaned his elbows on the table in an attitude of narration, much as though he were prepared to enter into explanations with a child. "You see, Marainz—"

"Oh, I know all that!" Vanda inter-

rupted; "you take me for a fool! You tell me all the things I know already. I want to know what's behind it all."

It was on the point of Severin's tongue to say, "Why, Rainer for one thing." But he checked himself on the verge. He looked for the moment at a loss. He made a fresh start, rather with the effect this time of blurting it out.

"Well, they didn't like the business from the first, and they didn't like Vallier being away when it all came out; they think he's —well, tried to keep out of it. It would have been better if he'd showed up more all through. It's just his having been away all the time as much as anything, don't you see."

Vanda was following his words intently.

"They'd have taken it better if he'd been here all along?"

"Ever so much. If he'd been here to address them—showed himself at the council even—"

He came to a pause.

"Then it will be all right when he comes back?" Vanda said.

"Oh, yes," said Severin — "yes."

He drummed with his fingers upon the table-cloth, looking straight ahead.

"Well, then?" cried the girl.

The officer continued to stare absently before him, with the air of contemplating from a distance her superb and colossal simplicity. Vanda twisted the little liqueurglass between her fingers and looked at him. Suddenly she set it down.

"I suppose you think — you seem to think — that Vallier — that the President —"

Severin waited.

"Do you imagine he has stayed away because he was afraid?"

"No, no! it isn't that. You don't understand."

He regarded her with a great despair of ever making her comprehend what he did mean.

"I think you are all cowards," said Vanda, clearly — "all of you."

83

Severin got up and walked to the window. The girl studied the set of his averted shoulders.

- "All of you," she repeated.
- "Oh, hell!" said Severin, under his breath.

The bird on the veranda trilled irritatingly; it seemed to have no conception of appropriateness. Severin believed once he heard a step in the corridor, and wheeled precipitately. The next second he was angry because the impulse had in his mind justified the girl's accusation of him. He gazed out again at the short, vivid shadows on the scorched lawn. Between hydrangea bushes he had a view of the broad empty drive by which the President's carriage must approach. He was watching.

Almost immediately the door-handle turned, and someone walked in. It was Vallier.

CHAPTER IX

CARTER hung over the window-sill of the little front office.

"Look," he said — "look at that! What're they doing there?"

"That's going to be a barricade," said Heffernan, from the depths of his wisdom. "You may have noticed that the pavingstones here are all loose; it's for the convenience of the public."

Carter disregarded the sarcasm.

"A barricade? Is that what it is? My Lord! Do they do that often? Ever seen it before?"

"Yes, rather," Heffernan replied.

Carter was watching eagerly the little group of shirt-sleeved and perspiring citizens, who seemed to have undertaken a time contract for road repairs. They prised the stones with crow-bars and picks. One man had a spade with which, in his

enthusiasm, he from time to time hit his companions upon the toes. They worked hastily, with frequent side-glances. Their bending figures stood out vividly under the hot, white sunlight.

- "Looks like business, h'm? Carter said.
- "Oh, they always belong to do that," rejoined Heffernan, who gathered colloquialisms in his journeyings as other persons collect old china or souvenir spoons, and fell back upon them at rare moments—"they belong to do that; it's a part of the programme. That will occupy them all day, with intervals for shouting. At five the militia will be ordered out, with blank cartridges. By ten they will all be very drunk, and go home weeping upon each other's necks."

Carter turned his head.

- "It strikes me you are very supercilious all of a sudden."
 - "Who? Me?"
- "Well, anyway, you were rattled enough last night."

"Oh, last night!" Heffernan said.

He was a man whose nervousness betrayed itself in attempts at humorous disparagement of the situation. When he was very nervous he laughed hilariously. He had not arrived at that yet, but as he stood at the window, fitting his fingers busily into opposite cuffs, there passed through his mind visions of the possible future fortunes of the paper which represented his chief worldly estate, and he made easy jokes at the expense of that mechanism which he expected hourly to wreak him harm. It was as though he believed that by persistently regarding a thing as puerile one could curtail its power of action.

He had been among those who looked forward with some degree of assurance to the President's return. He had a confidence in Vallier which he would have been at a loss to define. With those who knew him, Vallier's character was apt to be at times outweighed by his personal attributes. He had above all things cour-

age, and courage of the kind to be most effective in meeting a crisis like this, even though the crisis were one of his own creating. Heffernan never knew how much he had built upon Vallier's courage until the moment when Carter tumbled into the office, hot and excited, a little after noon, with the news that the President had arrived half an hour before, and driven in a closed carriage, by unimportant streets, to the back-door of the Presidency. At the last moment he had not faced the crowd; that was the only possible view of it. This undramatic entrance served to shake Heffernan's confidence completely. To his mind it was the second step in an ill-chosen policy. Vallier was afraid of the people — that was what it amounted to and, what was of more importance, he had permitted them to know that he was afraid. He had made two false steps already, and the third - as yet problematical - was likely to be an expensive one. Complete astonishment was as much the matter with Heffernan as anything else. He could

not get over the fact of the President's surreptitious arrival, and he said as much to his assistant upstairs in the front office.

"What would have been the sense of his putting up a bluff like that for nothing?" Carter said.

And Heffernan had replied: -

"Oh, but you don't know these people —you don't know them. This'll go further against Vallier than anything else."

"Then it will have to go a good long way," Carter grimly said.

That it had already gone some distance was to be judged by the demeanour of the little group of workers in the street. Carter watched them with a quite novel interest; it was as though he were looking on at some traditional rite, a performance he had read about, but never before seen. He thought of R. W. Chambers's romances. Here was practical demonstration of all that had been written on the subject. It was even worth spending seven months in a city which he always persisted in de-

scribing as uneventful. The shirt-sleeved men were promoted in his mind to positions of quite dramatic importance. Carter spent much of his time in the pursuit of local colour; he believed now that he was for once approaching realisation.

Meantime Heffernan fidgeted about the office, and involved the Government in a maze of sarcasm. His eloquence was undamped by the fact that Carter was paying no attention to him whatever. In the midst a boy arrived with a bundle of proof slips, and he sat down at the desk to correct them. Even then he wheeled continually in his chair to launch cynicisms which drifted like smoke past Carter's absorbed shoulders.

Once Carter said: -

"They work like a lot of mule-drivers. Shall I go down and help them?"

"Oh, if you've got time to burn!" returned Heffernan, unnecessarily.

Usually he dismissed slip after slip with a facile pen. To-day his correcting was a matter of time, and he went over two of

the slips twice. He pushed them on one side ultimately, and reached across to press an electric button in the wall. While he waited he tilted his chair back, with his knee against the desk edge, and looked toward Carter.

"I can't get over Vallier," he said for the tenth time.

"H'm?" Carter absently queried.

He was maintaining his balance at a perilous angle over the window-ledge, and after the boy had clattered upstairs for the proofs and disappeared with them behind a slammed door, Heffernan crossed the room and joined him. Carter made space for him silently.

Other workers had joined the original five, and the result was quite an assembly, of which the greater number merely looked on. Heffernan distinguished a glow of pink shirt-sleeves among the white, and the two men exclaimed at once:—

- "That's Steve! See him down there?"
- "Giddy youth!" said Carter.

In his interest he was gripping the stone

edge of the window-sill with his fingers. His right hand was nearest to Heffernan. Across two of the knuckles the skin was broken and marked with a smear of dried blood. Presently Heffernan noticed this.

"Look at your hand," he said. "What did you do to it?"

Carter glanced casually.

- "Did it against the Presidency railings."
- "Get pushed against them? It looks just as if you'd been hitting someone."

Carter was gazing obliviously, and after a pause, Heffernan exclaimed:—

- "You did hit someone!"
- "What?" said Carter. "Well, I didn't, then."

The sunlight made dusty patches on the office floor. The editor looked at his watch, and saw that it was after two o'clock. He glanced about the room. An engraving was crooked, and he thoughtfully straightened it. After a time he returned to his desk, and began to pull the littered papers aimlessly about. Suddenly his hand became arrested on a

little pile of slit envelopes. He stood there posed, listening intently in the direction of the window.

Outside was a murmur and trampling; boots scuffled upon pavement.

Carter exclaimed: —

"Why, what --- "

The paper crackled under Heffernan's hand.

"Listen!" he cried — "listen!"

Carter's shoulders had all but disappeared from view. He drew his head in presently to say:—

"Did you see that? Someone came and yelled something, and the whole blessed gang of 'em's scattered. My word! just dropped their tools and cut. They've gone now. Say, I can't stand this. I'm going down to see what the row's about. Coming, Heff?"

The editor seemed to catch his breath all at once.

- "No," he said.
- "Well, I am. Oh, come on!"
- "Of course," began Heffernan, with re-

gained sarcasm, "we haven't got to get any paper out for to-morrow, and, of course —"

Carter exploded.

"Oh, rot the paper! If the paper—"

"Listen!" said Heffernan again.

On the breezeless air came a little curious sound, a small, dulled report, as of a wooden box dropped upon pavement. There was another, and then a third, each thrilling oddly upon the silence.

The two men looked at each other, and Heffernan laughed.

They made a rush, and simultaneously hurled themselves upon the closed door.

The man with the spade had been the last to leave his work. Before going he had paused long enough to hurl his tool upright into a pile of loose earth. It stuck there now, erect and stiff, trailing an awkward blue shadow across the deserted pavement.

CHAPTER X

CARTER ran through back-streets whose air of complete desertion gave him something of a shock. He was keyed to expectancy. The stage setting should have been dramatic, and he was reminded at every step of a Sunday afternoon in Philadelphia. His own feet echoed on the empty side-walk. As he ran with bent head and elbows squared resolutely, he was saying over and over to himself: "They've fired on the Presidency!"

A dog picked itself up from gutter slumber to slink cornerwise across the street. In a doorway a child, in a tattered shirt, was eating bread and molasses. Washing hung complacently from a second-story window, on the sill of which tomatoes were set to ripen. These things flashed themselves vividly upon Carter's mind,

and contrived to annoy him. His sense of fitness was demanding that on the verge of an excitement of this dimension such small insignia of everyday existence should have been swept aside. He strained his ears, and could hear nothing. A portentous silence seemed to overhang the city.

Rounding a corner, he floundered over a pile of fresh earth flung up on the sidewalk. It tempered his irritation to recognise the unfinished attempt at an entrenchment extending across the street. He cleared the half-dug trench at a jump, his boots clogged with the soft clay, and pressed forward to where, in the distance, he perceived joyfully a second and more definite obstruction. The street narrowed here almost to an alley. At its entrance had been piled a barrier of what Carter took on the first instant for assorted rubbish. A cart had been dragged sideways, and empty barrels ranged about it strategically. The whole structure seemed to have been clumsily hurled together, the work of

a few minutes. Loose boards were laid across the top. In front of it a man was stationed. He was in clay-stained canvas overalls, and wore a strip of white rag knotted in the buttonhole of his shirt. He had a gun, which he held as if it were a pickaxe.

He intercepted Carter as the latter set foot on the wheel of the cart preparatory to jumping over, and Carter, divining his intention, made a break for one end of the barrier. But the man arrived simultaneously. Carter had one knee up, and in the ensuing scuffle the top plank of the pile gave way and let him down with a run.

He stood off and cursed the sentry in fluent American. The sentry appeared a peaceful sort of man, on whom eloquence made no impression. He laid the gun across his knee and, jerking leisurely at the displaced plank, succeeded in pulling it back into position.

Carter had a moment of rapid annoyance. He straightened his collar.

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"You big fool!" he shouted. "What do you think you're doing?"

The man continued to busy himself in repairing the devastation caused by assault upon a barrier plainly not intended for active service.

"You not can pass," he explained courteously.

"Don't talk like a goat," said Carter; "this is a public thoroughfare. I want to get to the Presidency."

The man repeated immovably: -

"You not can pass. It is orders."

"Whose orders?"

"The orders,"

Carter marshalled all his knowledge of the language to witness that he was a representative of the *Press*. But this overalled barbarian had apparently never heard of the *Press*; if he had, he concealed his intelligence admirably. Carter wrestled with him as Jacob wrestled with the angel. The man waited until he had entirely finished. He repeated then with exactly his original intonation:—

"It is alright. You not can pass."

"Well, then, I'm going," said Carter; "d'you hear?"

He glared at the sentry to see what effect this resolution would have. The man was intent upon strengthening the barrier against further dissolution.

"I'm going," said Carter again.

The man permitted him to swing one leg unmolested across an outlying board before he said:—

"If you go, I shoot. I have orders."

"What?" snarled Carter. "Damn your orders!"

But he arrested his progress so far as to sit astride there, with one leg slung across the barricade, after the fashion of a boy on an orchard fence, and glower at the man with a resentment which he had no hesitation in justifying to himself as righteous. He was for the moment nothing more or less than a newspaper reporter balked of his prey. He wondered whether the gun were really loaded. He looked at the man and tried to trap him into some betrayal

of a bluff. After long deliberation he began cautiously to pull his leg up after him.

The debatable gun flew to the sentry's shoulder, and to Carter it had at that instant every appearance of being loaded.

"All right," he said; "I didn't go, did I? What's eating you?"

There came from the left a thin splutter of musketry. Carter could have howled his hatred of the sentry aloud. He slid back to the ground, catching his trousers on a nail as he did so, and this last culminating annoyance showed his mind to him as a blank which could contain nothing sufficiently potent to be worth the saying. It would have been a gilded pleasure to have killed the sentry by slow and Chinese tortures.

He realised all at once that it might be better, instead of wasting further time in an effort to beat reason into this monument of stupidity, to retrace his way through the labyrinth of small streets and attempt the Presidency by a different ap-

proach. He had already started back up the alley, when he found his retreat barred by three men. They each had the knot of white which decked the buttonhole of the misguided sentry, and in the foremost Carter recognised the man whom he had knocked down that morning outside the Presidency gates. It gave him a genuine satisfaction to read in his split lip the result of his own handiwork. The man appeared more than a little bit drunk.

By instinct, and entirely against his will, Carter's pace slackened. The three men had spread themselves so as to occupy the whole width of the alley, and they confronted him like an army.

There was an impressive moment. The man with the split lip said something to his right-hand companion, who laughed. To save his soul Carter could not have told what they were saying; his acquaintance with the language, never supreme, had in the face of a crisis deserted him absolutely. He occupied himself rigidly in preserving an attitude which should

pass for indifference. It was his aim also to preserve the appearance of understanding perfectly everything they said, and he felt that he was accomplishing this after a fashion which taught him a sudden and complete contempt for himself in an emergency.

The tall man was involved three deep in a harangue which seemed to have the American for its object. He spun epithets one at a time, deliberately. His deliberation decreased as he went on; he ended finally in a snarl that resembled the running down of clock-work, and began to edge up sidelong. Carter tried without turning his head to see what the sentry was doing, but the sentry appeared content with the merely passive rôle of spectator. So far as Carter could ascertain, he was leaning upon his gun in a way which proclaimed openly and beyond doubt its harmlessness.

The tall man had the bearing common to the bully of every nationality bent upon creating a row. As he edged, Carter edged

also, carefully, and with an eye always upon the right hands of his opponents. He had discovered by a feint that one of the three carried no knife at all, and he was calculating a way to push past this man and gain the open end of the alley. Meantime the tall man had succeeded in dragging the sentry into what was apparently a discussion. He was gesticulating elaborately. All at once, by a phenomenon, Carter's grip of the language returned sufficiently to disclose to him the drift of their argu-The tall man was representing picturesquely that Carter was a foreigner and a friend of Vallier's, and that it was ordained for all foreigners to be killed. The sentry seemed disposed to contest the point, more from obstinacy than any other motive.

Carter's indifference vanished, leaving him with a curious dryness of the throat.

"That's a damn lie!" he cried luridly, breaking in upon the dispute with a fine disregard for the limits of their comprehension, "that's what it is. You can't

put that bluff up on me—it's a damn lie!"

The four men swung round upon him simultaneously. Carter had a vivid theatrical moment in which he cared for none of them.

"It's a lie!" He addressed the sentry in particular; "you're talking through your hat. You can't touch me unless I've done something illegal, and you can't touch me then without a warrant, and you know it. You're nothing to do with me at all."

"All foreigners are to be killed," said the tall man, eying Carter evilly and flaunting a knowledge of bad English; "it is just said."

"Rot!" said Carter. "Prove it — you can't!"

"I not have orders," said the sentry, and for the first time it occurred to Carter to view his obstinacy as a great and noble quality.—" I not have orders!"

"There!" said Carter, triumphantly, "you see now!"

He was feeling like a man on the stage.

Every moment he expected the tall man to leave off haggling over official authority and knife him without further ceremony. But he only continued to eye Carter from a few paces off, swaying a little as he stood; he was waiting for the American to appear afraid.

By comparison, the worst back-slum in San Francisco appealed to Carter at that instant as a remarkably healthy locality. But if he was killed, he was going to say a few things first. He turned on the tall man abruptly.

"You think you're no end smart going round with that ten-cent favour in your buttonhole, don't you? You'd better get your face washed if you intend to run for the Senate; you resemble an object-lesson at a temperance lecture. You think a lot of yourself, but if you presumed to exist in any decently civilised town, you'd be suppressed by the Board of Sanitation. I broke your jaw for you this morning because you said something I didn't like, and I'm ready to do it again. What? You

can't do it; you can't touch me. See? I belong to a nation that could buy up your —— dirty little town and give it away for a Sunday-school prize. If —"

He came to a pause. He was taken aback to find himself gazing into a small black hole surrounded by metal. For the moment, as its import dawned upon him, that black hole usurped the entire immediate landscape. He regarded it steadily, and passed his tongue across his lips.

His fund of eloquence was shaken. His hand went groping by a primitive instinct in the recesses of his trousers, and encountered there only a pocket-knife. It felt smooth to the touch, and he remembered irrelevantly that the handle was white. It was one of those patent knives which are opened by pressing the opposite blade.

His eyes smarted with his determination not to blink. The round hole appeared to contract, waver, dissolve, and rematerialise, advance close to his face, and then recede. At one moment it was a huge black disc

like a railway tunnel; at the next a pin-hole in a world of dazzling metal. It had a thousand aspects at once. He saw a little hump above it, which was the point by which you sighted, and for a space he was regarding this through a shifting mist.

Presently the mist cleared. He was looking only at a half-drunken mechanic holding a revolver. There was a pricking sensation in the neighbourhood of his spine, and he felt like a man dropped suddenly from a height; but his perspective was returning to him by inches.

"Put that penny pop-gun in your pocket, and don't play the goat," he heard himself say.

The unsteadiness of the man's hand caused the revolver to wobble quaintly; his finger fidgeted with the trigger. The other men were grinning.

Carter squared his shoulders and lifted his chin; he was wishing intensely that the man would fire and get it over. And he saw local colour as a quality after all desirable chiefly in the pages of a weekly paper.

The splutter of musketry sounded again, a little nearer. The sentry pricked his ears.

"I'm an American!" Carter shouted.
"D'you hear? An American. I'm under the flag of the United States. Just you shoot me once, and see what you get! Shoot me! Let's see you do it, now! Try it, that's all! Why don't you try it?"

This last defiance seemed to surprise the tall man into complete inactivity. His revolver waggled, and he simply stared at Carter, towering before him in a heroic pose born of the moment, as might an amazed pig.

All at once Carter turned. He pushed the astonished sentry to one side, and, vaulting the barrier, took to his heels down the open street. Behind him a dislodged plank clattered on to the asphalt.

Before he had gone ten paces he felt in his shoulder the stinging coldness produced sometimes by intense heat. He set his teeth, and ran doggedly. His boots kept a steady rhythm.

He did not stop until he found himself unaccountably in the square where were the little stone lions. Last night's trampled confetti was scattered about the pavement. He reached for the edge of one of the fountain basins, and sat down on it, breathing heavily.

There was something warm trickling about his left wrist. Looking down, he saw blood dripping from the cuff. crooked his arm out stiffly, as if it did not belong to his body, and began to feel with his right hand in his left breast-pocket. There was a silk handkerchief there. He drew it out, fold by fold, with a strange new deliberation in his movements. In doing so an envelope fell from his pocket to the ground. He did not pick it up. He proceeded to arrange the handkerchief with one hand across his knee, using great care in its adjustment. Once he glanced at the water reflectively.

The sun was very hot. Presently Carter slipped to the level of the pavement, his right arm flung across the edge of the

fountain and his head resting against it. Anyone from a distance might have supposed him to be drunk.

The envelope which had fallen to the ground lay there face downward. Upon the back of it was written with a stylographic pen, "In the event of a public insurrection taking place in this city before the hour of 5.30 p.m. to-day, July 11, I, Edward Carter—"

The little stone lions dozed imperturbably in the sunshine.

CHAPTER XI

The spatter of musketry awoke Vanda with a jerk. She sat upright, clutching mechanically the silken hammock pillows, and gazed about her with the vagueness of sudden arousing. The afternoon sun sifting through the veranda screen touched the fern-leaves with points of emerald. Somewhere near at hand a dog whined; she heard the quick rush and patter of its feet over the matted floor.

"Dick!" she called — "Dick!" There was a silence. The dog whined again. A sudden panic of loneliness struck her. She slipped from the hammock, and crossed through the French window into the little empty room. Vallier's bull-terrier was there nosing at the shut door. "Good old man!" she said. "Dick!"

She opened the door a crack, and he shot past her feet into the hall beyond.

Vanda followed him. At the farther end, under a trophy of Afghan weapons, Vallier and two others were standing. The President had his back toward her, and his right hand was thrust deeply into his pocket. Vanda's skirts whirled across the hall.

"What is it?" she cried. "What is happening?"

It was not until she was close upon them that she saw Severin was supporting by the arm one of the servants. The man's face was white and dazed, and smeared across the chin with blood. His left hand, dangling at his side, looked to be a mere smudge of glistening red. Blood was dripping across the mosaic flooring. Vanda came to a stop.

"Oh!" she said — "oh!"

She began to back away, her hands clenched tightly. The man tried to smile at her, and the effort made his expression grotesque. Vallier seemed unaware of the girl's approach. His head was flung back, and his face had hardened, as it did in moments of excitement.

"Let him be!" he almost snarled at Severin. "He can stand, can't he? Let him be! Keep your hand up—up! My God, if I ever saw such a set! Come on with me."

He turned and pushed his way through a beaded curtain. The man followed him unsteadily. Vanda stood aside and watched them pass. She was left alone with Severin in the hall.

"What happened to Brand?" she asked breathlessly. "What did he do? Where was the firing?"

"It was a row at the stable gates. Brand was closing them, and someone fetched him in the hand. He's a plucky devil!"

"They shot him? Shot Brand?"

She groped her way and sat down. Her eyes stared, fascinated at the wet splashes on the rainbow-hued floor. They seemed to have suddenly a new and awful meaning to her.

"In the hand," said Severin, quickly. "He dodged it." He dragged a Turkish rug across the stains, straightening it out

1

with his foot. "They seem dead on Brand for no reason whatever. He's got the luck of the devil. They chucked a stone in the front avenue this morning and just missed him."

"To fire on a servant!" said the girl. "What has happened to them? They must have gone mad."

"Seems like it," returned Severin, shortly.

The bull-terrier pattered over and sniffed round the edges of the rug. Severin picked him up in his arms. He stood gazing at the floor in a deep study, rubbing the dog's head with his hand. The terrier made little affectionate pretences of snapping at his wrist.

"But, why—look—" the girl began. She watched the steady movement of his hand. "If they fire on the house—"

"They've done that already," said Severin.
"Oh, they've not smashed anything yet.
They're just a little bit mad. It's quite likely they will do their best to make it exciting for us. I don't apprehend anything—very serious, you know."

There was a moment's silence. He knew that he was lying badly.

"Severin," said the girl, "you know I'm

— I'm in with you all. I'm in with you right through."

"I know that." He smiled down on her exactly as if he did not know that "you" stood for Vallier. "You needn't tell me that."

"Well, he seems —".

"Don't you mind anything he says." Severin stroked the dog's ears hurriedly. "You — well, you know how things are." He had noticed the girl straighten herself unconsciously at his words. "He's a bit upset."

"I think everyone's upset, if you ask me." She caught his eye, and flushed as though the outburst had recalled her to herself. She put out her hand to the terrier in Severin's arms. "Good Dick!" she said.

Severin set the dog on the floor mechanically, and watched him sidle across for a caress. He was regarding the girl on the

divan rather as though her presence there at all implied a problem. The terrier stood up with his paws against her white skirt.

"Vallier thinks I oughtn't to be here."

"Oh, well... we all think that in a way. It's just that, if there's going to be any trouble, we'd rather you weren't likely to be mixed up in it. But there's no good talking now."

Vanda seemed to deliberate a remark.

"I came intentionally," she said at last. Severin cleared his throat.

"I knew that," he returned simply.

He was wondering to what greater extent she could possibly meditate giving herself away.

Outside a solitary shot exploded dully.

"We're all in it together," Vanda said. Their quarrel of the morning was perhaps before her mind. "The idea is to make the best of it. We all stand in together, don't we, Severin?"

She put out her hand, and he took it quite gravely.

"All of us," he repeated. He stood there a moment, smiling, before he said, "I must go and see how Brand is doing."

"Poor Brand!" said the girl.

But she said it absently, and after he had gone she still sat there, looking down at the soft-coloured rug. After a time she rose and walked back into Vallier's room. The place had a look of disorder, which she had leisure now to notice. A chair pushed back had rucked the leopard-skin on the floor; on the writing-table stood a whisky-decanter and an empty tumbler. It seemed that someone had hurriedly left the telephone without replacing the tube. She threw herself back in the big armchair, her head resting against her locked fingers, and waited.

Almost immediately Vallier came in. He walked, without seeing her, to the telephone. From her corner she could view the intent bend of his head as he stood there; his right hand was still deep in his pocket.

"Are you there still?" he said in a low

voice. "Are you — All right. Well, have the 22nd ready. The 22nd. What? Yes. . . . Yes. . . . When you hear. . . . If necessary. . . . What? . . . You must have them ready. . . . Yes."

He replaced the tube, and, turning to the writing-table, pulled out a drawer. He took his right hand from his pocket then for the first time, and with it a revolver. He dropped the revolver quickly into the drawer, and, closing it, stood there for some seconds, his fingers braced thoughtfully against the little brass handles.

Vanda raised her slim length from the armchair and shook out her skirt. She walked to the window. From the remote side of the garden came the broken splutter of firearms—a sound rendered familiar now by repetition. She turned to the man who was standing silently by the writingtable.

"They are amusing themselves out there, n'est-ce pas?" Her voice had exactly the ring of flippant comment upon an every-day affair.

"What?" said Vallier. He crossed the room, and she felt his hand not unkindly upon her shoulder. "We'll go to hell our own way yet," he laughed.

CHAPTER XII

STUGGERS, as Carter said, was immutable. From the Consulate Stuggers had surveyed the disarray of the city with a supreme and colossal aloofness which graved his nationality upon him in letters of brass. About four, however, he came out into the back garden to the Consul. The Consul, interrupted in the pruning of a rose-bush, straightened his back and watched patiently Stuggers's approach up the gravel path.

"I thought you might wish to know, sir," Stuggers announced, "as 'ow Mr. Carter is in the dining-room 'ere, and, judgin' by the looks of 'im, 'e's 'ad a bit of knockin' about. One of these rotters, sir, they 'it 'im, it appears. 'E's bin a-bleedin' all hover 'is shirt, an' I made free to give 'im a glass of brandy, sir, seein' as 'e mentioned it, like."

"Dear me!" said the Consul — "dear me."

He was quite perturbed when he bustled into the dining-room, where Carter was seated on the sofa, pale and curiously shamefaced, with one arm in a sling of Stuggers's improvisation.

- "What is this?" said Landon. "Stuggers tells me you have been hurt. I had no idea of it. Is it—is it serious?"
- "Nothing, really; just a slight bulletwound," returned the boy, absurdly. "I believe Stuggers thought I was drunk; I've laid into your brandy a bit, Mr. Landon."
- "A bullet-wound?" The Consul, gripping a chair-back, was the embodiment of mingled solicitude and incomprehension. "Do you mean to tell me they—that someone attempted to shoot you? I—I can't understand it!"
 - "That was about the way of it."
- "But I really, I don't grasp it," the Consul repeated helplessly; "I can only judge the man must have been drunk."
 - "He was," said Carter, dryly; "but, un-

fortunately, not to the precise extent for which I had allowed."

"And you mean — I understand you to say he fired at you deliberately? Well!"

The Consul found a chair, and somehow sat down upon it. He had the exact expression of a man who finds his treasured convictions of a sudden rudely swept from under him.

" It seems to me an extraordinary thing."

"Oh, humorous!" said Carter.

He was engaged in tightening the knot of the sling with his teeth.

"You must see Mrs. Landon," said the Consul, arousing into a state approaching decision—"you must see Mrs. Landon. She will be able to do something for you. I don't know. . . . Are you in much pain?"

"It's all right for the present, thanks. I'll see Blain on my way back. Stuggers gave me a brush down. I feel stiff and dirty, that's all."

He did his best to avoid all possibility of Mrs. Landon, but fatigue had made him

unwary. He gave way weakly before the Consul's protestations, with the result that the good lady bore down upon him unerringly from the heavens.

"It's exactly like Mr. Landon," she cheerfully said; "he has no idea of anything. Really, I think if something were to happen one of these days, it would just serve him right!"

If there was vagueness in her meaning, there was none in her plan of attack. She hustled Carter up to the spare bedroom, and proceeded to embarrass him profoundly and unspeakably by slitting up his shirt-sleeve with a pair of scissors.

"If I'm not old enough to be your aunt, it's a pity," she said with a directness that would have made him blush could anything have achieved that phenomenon.

She felt over his shoulder with deft fingers. The wound had had time to stiffen, and Carter set his teeth.

"It's come clean out of the other side," said Mrs. Landon. "I guess it won't hurt you much to-morrow, except stiffness."

She disappeared, to return after an interval, during which he heard subdued rummaging in an adjacent room, with the paraphernalia of home bandaging and one of the Consul's clean shirts. Carter had a momentary qualm lest she should intend putting it on him; he felt helpless before her commanding energy. But she contented herself with a mysterious adjustment of iodoform and soft torn linen. She told Carter she believed in iodoform, and always kept it in the house, because you never knew when it was going to be wanted.

"The bath-room is just next door," she said to him, gathering up the unused bandages in a way that made Carter feel heroic and veteran. "When I come back you'll be ready for me to fix that sling for you."

"Thank you," said Carter, gratefully. She put her head back to add:—

"And you're not going to step outside this house to-night, Mr. Carter."

Carter was in the act of reaching out for the Consul's shirt, and his reply was this time unintelligible. When he was

finally assured of her steps fading down the passage, he crossed over and locked the door.

She fussed around him later with biscuits and a tumbler of whisky-and-milk. She appeared one of those women to whom the mere prospect of someone to fidget over renders inexplicably happy. Carter felt that the day was opening up for him new vistas in Mrs. Landon's character. He escaped from her ministrations ultimately, and sought the Consul in the garden. The Consul had slunk back unobtrusively to his pruning; he looked up, knife in hand, with an air suggestive of apology.

"I see you look more comfortable," he said; "I thought you would. Mrs. Landon is an excellent hand at that sort of thing."

"She is," replied Carter, deeply. He sat down on an inverted flower-pot. "I've got one of your shirts on."

"That's right," said the Consul—"that's right." He went on handling his plants

lovingly while Carter watched him. "What I fail altogether to understand," he said at last, "is what the police were doing."

"The police," said Carter, "are having a happy time. I suppose you know they shot one of them "-he was enjoying the Consul's shocked amaze — "right through the head? And two others got hurt, and I understand they potted one of the President's servants. The house is practically in a state of siege; they commenced firing on it at a quarter after two. Of course, they can do a lot of that without hitting anything. Why, they haven't a dozen sound guns among them! Rainer is appointed chief of the new committee of public order. Humorous, that! The rioting is nothing to do with him; he and his gang are working all the time to put it down."

" It is extraordinary," said the Consul.

"And another thing," Carter continued brutally, "what I came round for, really: I heard—mind you, I only heard—that there is an edict out for the assassination

of foreigners. It probably isn't anything at all, and I only know it by rumour; but I do know there's a pretty strong feeling against us, and I thought I'd best warn you."

He meant to have presented this announcement dramatically on the first moment of his arrival, blood-stained and dusty. But even then it is likely the Consul would have received it with the exact amount of tranquillity he now displayed.

"It will blow over," he said—"it will blow over. I've heard that before. When it comes to the scratch, they don't dare to lay a hand on us. They wouldn't—"

His eyes encountered Carter's white sling, and he was abruptly silent.

"Of course," Carter began, "I don't attach undue importance to anything; but the rioting is pretty serious, and I thought I'd better tell you. The danger won't come from Rainer's set; it'll come from the riff-raff. You don't see anything of it here. Why, if you'd been out this morning—"

"If they massacre the foreign element in this city," said the Consul, with a glint of humour, "they will have to begin among themselves."

"Oh, they're all blue-blooded patriots, every one of 'em! Dirty pigs! I don't give a damn for their shooting. But, my heavens! there's a row on!"

The Consul caressed the blade of the pruning-knife with his thumb, looking down gravely at the sunlit grass. Carter from his flower-pot saw the picture of an old man in a linen suit trying awkwardly to piece together the fragments of his shattered security. He felt all at once a protective affection for the Consul and his roses.

"It is just likely," said Mr. Landon, keeping his troubled eyes on the grass, "that I may have been premature, Mr. Carter; I may not have realised things to be just the way they are. You see, I'm elderly now, and events move too quick for me. But there's Mrs. Landon; it's her I'm thinking of if anything happens. I

needn't say how grateful I am to you, my boy."

Carter was of the class who would cross a ploughed field in slippers to escape gratitude. Thanks verged to him upon absolute indecency. He exclaimed now hastily:—

"Don't you think anything about that, . Mr. Landon. I mean, of course, there's a chance, but it very likely won't amount to anything. And Rainer's all right, anyway, and Rainer's the strong party just now. It was only just that I thought I'd let you know. And don't go letting on to Mrs. Landon what I said."

A tortoiseshell cat, stretching itself, advanced leisurely down the gravelled walk between the rose-bushes.

"I must get back to the office," said Carter, presently. "The place is probably a howling wilderness by now, with Heff having seventeen kinds of fits in the middle of it. He'll be tearing crazy if I don't turn up."

"You speak respectfully of your chief," said the Consul.

129

"I do. You don't seem to appreciate, Mr. Landon, that the *Press* revolves around me like the earth round the sun. I'm going to harrow Heffernan's feelings."

"Do you think—" The Consul was eying him doubtfully. "I don't know but what you'd better stay here—to-night, anyhow. Do you feel you have to go? Mrs. Landon will put you up."

"Thank you, but I won't."

"You know, my boy, we'd be only too glad to have you here."

"You're both tremendously good," said Carter. "And that reminds me to ask another favour of you: I presume this house is constructed with a back-door?"

"Certainly."

"I am at present," said Carter, "a prisoner at Mrs. Landon's decree. If I try to sneak out by the front-door, she'll spot me as sure as sure. Therefore, as a matter of expedience—"

He looked into the Consul's eyes, and encountered there a smile.

"We will stroll down the garden," said

the Consul, "and be gathering some flowers."

Their stroll terminated unobtrusively before a small gate.

"It's very rusty," said the Consul, working at a bolt. He laughed boyishly. "I shan't know how to face Mrs. Landon."

"Give her my love," Carter suggested, "and tell her I will be back to-morrow to apologise."

"God bless you, kid!" said the Consul, huskily. "Look out for yourself."

The door closed gratingly. Carter looked both ways up the narrow back-street before he set off at a studiously careless walk.

CHAPTER XIII

Toward the close of the afternoon the street firing grew desultory. Outbreaks of tumult were succeeded by spaces of silence, in which the little city seemed to draw breath quiveringly. Women came to the doorsteps to gossip, with nervous sideglances and tongues less garrulous than their wont. Children, quick to grasp a new model for their play, marched shouting up and down, and were cuffed and dragged indoors. Down a quiet street at sunset a sorrel horse limped hesitatingly, stumbling over the trailing bridle, his saddle-cloth twisted to one side. were stains on the empty holster. Streaked with sweat and foam, he looked like a horse that had laboured against the swirl of some strong tide. He came to a pause by an empty bucket, nosing it wearily, his big

eyes gentle and questful. He had been shot in one foot; dark, thick blood oozed from the cracked hoof and made a little glistening pool where he stood. Presently a small tranquil moon peered down from the violet sky. Up at the Presidency Vanda played Leslie Stuart's songs on the piano.

The sheer fortune which made Rainer's name a ten days' wonder in Continental newspapers had carried him so far as a certain little room with bronze panels. was a curious interview. Vallier leaned back in an easy-chair; the light from a rose-shaded lamp made tinted shadows on his white shirt-sleeves. He had exactly the bearing of a man in his own smokingroom. Rainer stood just as he had done from the first moment of his entrance. straight and square-shouldered, on the leopard-skin rug. His chin was a little lifted, his gray eyes the eyes of a dreamer rather than a soldier. His dust-soiled clothes fitted him loosely.

"I am to take your proposal," said Val-

lier, eventually, "as amounting to an invitation to me to resign my authority here, and give over the government of the country to your gutter-bred 'army of the people,' in which event you very courte-ously offer me a free escort across the frontier. Very well. What assurance have I of safety? Exactly your word. You come here, with the scum of the city at your heels, and you talk about official security and the pledge of a soldier. Do you call that rabble outside soldiers? Do you consider yourself a soldier? May I inquire what evidence of good faith you propose to give me?"

"The Presidency has been practically in our hands for the past four hours," said Rainer, quietly. "Your Excellency will have observed that up to now we have used no personal violence."

- "You shot my servant, damn you!"
- "He was fired upon by someone in the crowd, not one of our own people."
- "Have you, in God's name, the effrontery to expect me to distinguish between

one kind of cur and another?" Vallier gritted out.

Rainer waited a minute.

"I am to infer," he said then, "that your Excellency refuses our terms?"

"You may infer," retorted Vallier, tensely, "that his Excellency has only one present interest, which is to see you in hell by the most expeditious route."

"I would remind you," said Rainer, shifting slightly his position, "that all telegraphic communication was cut off by five o'clock."

The President regarded him musingly.

"You're a bold man."

"As a soldier, your Excellency will recognise that I cannot afford to be otherwise."

Vallier, flung back in the chair, bit on his big cigar silently. Pure curiosity had brought him down to see this man, the one man in the country who could stand up against him. He was understanding now, bit by bit, the strange personal force, the sheer magnetism of purpose, which

had made Rainer the man of the situation; that had made him to all intents and purposes the situation itself. He was conscious, looking at him, of something of that admiration which is, perhaps, the most sincere in the world, the admiration of adversary for adversary. It was the soldier of fortune recognising the soldier of fortune. He leaned forward, gripping the chair-arm, with the rare light in his eyes which only those who had fought under him knew wholly. For the moment they were no longer President and insurgent; they were simply two men involved in a common lottery.

"You are a clever man," said Vallier.
"You have planned and schemed and worked out every detail in advance. You have built up your position step by step, and you've chosen exactly the right minute for action. The troops are out. Of the two volunteer regiments quartered in the city one half are already disaffected, and the other half will stand in with you if you succeed. You have organised cred-

itably. I admit frankly that the situation is at this moment in your hands. But how is it going to end? How long will your dream last you? Not a day! You think you know these people because you are one of them. You think you can be sure of them. I know them better than you ever will, and I tell you you're a fool. Good God, man! do you think I've governed them these years for nothing? Haven't I led them, fought with them, handled them? I know them, and I know they're rotten through and through. They'll shout for you to-night and the next man to-morrow. You can't depend on them for an hour, and you know it's the truth. These 'people' that you pin your faith to, that you set up as an ideal - what are they to-night, three-fourths of them, but mere drunken rioters? I don't need to go outside to know what the city is like this minute. And even if they stand by you to-day, what will happen after? Do you think they'll stand one of their own level for a leader? I tell you

again, you're a blind fool! You have built your house well, but you've built it with sand.

"You talk of dying for your cause. Well, you stand every chance of doing it! I talk to you here to-night, but there'll be no mouthing of terms to-morrow. You'll be shot down in the street, you and such of your 'people' as still remain to you, for a common insurgent!"

There was a silence. Vallier stood up abruptly, and held out his hand. There was a hard smile on his lips.

"Good night, Rainer," he said; "you fought under me once at Quinas Hill. Let me wish you the best luck still left to you—to die before your dream does!"

He swung back almost savagely to his earlier mood as Rainer moved away.

"May I inquire," he then flung out, "whether that rag in your buttonhole is a temperance emblem, or merely symbolical of the fact that you have staked your shirt upon the issue of to-day? I beg pardon; I perceive it to be the badge of your forth-

coming Utopia. It is at least original — and cheap!"

"It is clean, your Excellency," said Rainer, looking at him squarely.

The door flew open suddenly, and Vanda came in. The impulse of her entrance had carried her well across the threshold before she saw that the room held two occupants. She came then to a pause, drawing herself up slim and insolent in her white frock. Rainer's eyes rested on her face for barely a second; she was looking straight past him at the wall. He addressed himself to Vallier.

"If you wish a safe-conduct for any of your household —"

It was the President again who answered him.

"When I want a safe-conduct for any of my household I'll ask you for it. In the meantime, they are wise in considering themselves infinitely safer here. May I wish you good evening?"

He was engaged in relighting his cigar over the lamp-chimney. Rainer walked to

the door without looking toward the girl who stood there. He had to pass so close as nearly to brush her skirts. Without glancing, he was aware how she carefully drew them aside. He carried, though he had not seen it, her gaze of complete unrecognition out with him into the night. The air, sultry still, had lost its greatest oppression. A pleasant smell of cooling earth rose from the lawn, dew-drenched, and silvered by the electric lamp on the driveway. The pointed leaves of the yuccas gleamed like stretched silk. Great white stars were set in a sky of blue velvet. There was remote shouting in the streets. Somewhere in the darkness a woman screamed.

In one of the lighted public squares a big, drunken mechanic, with the white rag knotted in his button-hole, had taken a policeman's helmet from him, and was waving it aloft on a stick.

"Give three cheers for 'je new Republic!'" he cried.

The little bareheaded officer made ridiculous clutches in the air.

"Don't play the fool, now! Gimme it. Don't play the fool!"

"Then gi' three cheers for 'je new Republic!' Three cheers—"

The little policeman gazed about him like a rabbit in a trap. Perspiration showed on his forehead. He cheered at last weakly.

"Louder!" the big man insisted, towering solemnly above him—"louder! That's better. Now again... One... Two..."

At a window in a side-street a man in shirt-sleeves was chanting drowsily the National Anthem.

This was the dawn of Rainer's new republic.

CHAPTER XIV

The whole significance of the situation, to Heffernan's mind, lay in the fact that he could get no café to admit the possibility of supplying him with breakfast. He managed, however, while Carter was sending off his Journal despatch, to purchase at a corner grocery some biscuits and a tin of sardines, which they ate with their fingers off a newspaper spread on one of the office desks. He grumbled during the process deeply. Carter was both hungry and jubilant. He worked through the meal with one hand, radiating facts like a twopenny guide-book.

"They broke Schmidl's big plate-glass window right to bits. Five of the city police are in the hospital; one got all his ribs smashed in. And they killed three of the mounted corps yesterday—two in the afternoon and one last night."

"Hang the police!" said Heffernan.

"How do you expect police to handle a mob like that?"

"They pulled one chap right off his horse and trampled on him. I know a man who saw it, and I saw the same chap myself in the morning, trying to handle the crowd outside the Presidency. He was simply cuffing everyone he could lay hands on. They dragged him right off his horse and stamped on him."

"I wonder if they'd have had any butter at that place," said Heffernan. "I wish I'd thought of it."

Carter vibrated uneasily between the window and the sardine-box. Later he asked, with his mouth full of biscuit:—

"Think they'll make any trouble for us?"

"Here?" Heffernan cried. "No. Oh, it isn't likely to affect us any!"

But after Carter had gone he went downstairs and tried all the ground-floor fastenings. He whistled softly as he moved about. A shabby coat belonging to the

recalcitrant Steve was slung across a bench. The big machines stood passive; it hurt Heffernan to look at them. He picked up a bunch of cotton-waste and wiped a slight accumulation of oil from one of the shining steel rods. Half mechanically he pushed over the controlling lever; it answered to his touch with a nerveless clank that was worse than the silence. He threw the cotton-waste in a corner, and wandered upstairs again, wiping his hand on his trousers.

The hot sunlight beat in through the open window. A blue-bottle fly buzzed irritatingly. Across the street was a vivid red-striped awning. The empty sardinetin stood forlornly on the outspread newspaper. Heffernan crumpled them up together, and stuffed them into the wastepaper basket; then he sat down before the desk and, unlocking it, began to go through his books.

His forehead drew gradually into lines of intentness. He sat staring at the open ledger, his fingers drumming thoughtfully

on the edge of his chair. The empty, sun-flooded office had faded; he was seated in a cool, half-darkened parlour—the parlour of a Philadelphia school—and there was a young girl sitting opposite chattering to him. She had gray Irish eyes and light-brown hair tied in two braids. She was too much like Heffernan to be pretty, but it had never occurred to him to question her prettiness; she was simply his little girl. It was four years since he had seen her; in two more she would have finished her schooling. Now, if the paper failed—

There was a hasty galloping of boots on the stairs. Carter tore up and flung himself into the room.

"They've ordered out the 22nd Cavalry—the 22nd! What? It's so. The 22nd Cavalry!"

The muscles of Heffernan's hand, stretched on the ledger, contracted sharply. He swallowed once, staring at the perspiring Carter in the middle of the floor; then he said quite stolidly:—

L 145

"Oh, they've got to get here first!"

"They'll be inside the city by two o'clock. They were ready yesterday. This begins to look like a pretty big coup on Vallier's part, h'm? I bet you he was just holding back for it all the time. Oh, he's a smart man! What'll you take he hadn't got this all mapped out?"

Heffernan reflected aloud.

"Rainer's been counting on the volunteer regiments if it came to the scratch; but they won't stand up against the 22nd two minutes. They know which side their bread's buttered. They won't go against the crowd at first, but they won't go with 'em. They'll stand off and watch."

Carter waved his uninjured arm at an imaginary populace.

"Go home, little people, to your beds. Well, it'll have been a good-sized row by the time everything's finished. We shall see several kinds of street-fighting before night."

Heffernan looked at him with a curious grimness.

- "Have you ever seen a crowd handled by a cavalry regiment?" he asked.
 - "No. Why?"
- "I have," said Heffernan—"ten years ago. It isn't pretty."
- "This crowd won't wait to be handled; they'll break and run. I can see them doing it. Rainer's putting up a big bluff, but it won't cut ice once they get on to Vallier's real game. There isn't the man living that could hold them once they start to break not a man on God's earth!"
- "There's one," said Heffernan "just one."
 - "Who?" Carter confidently demanded.
 - "Vallier!"

CHAPTER XV

VALLIER crossed the room and poured himself out a glass of whisky. The face that looked back at him from the panelled slip of mirror above the sideboard was simply the face of a tired man. The last twenty-four hours had accentuated the lines about his eyes, hardened almost to permanency the straightness of his mouth. hair was tumbled back from his forehead. He knew now that up to the final moment of their entrance into the city he had not entirely trusted the 22nd. In imagination he had seen a hundred times the men standing immobile as wooden posts while their officers impotently raged. Severin excitedly brought him the news of their arrival, he had merely said, "Thank you," and had then gone on unemotionally with his writing. Now that he was alone his grip of himself had for the moment

slackened; his hand closed on the tumbler almost with a jerk.

The door opened, and Vanda came in, followed by Severin. The girl swept straight over to where Vallier was standing. Her hands dropped clenched at her sides; her face had a curious look of whiteness.

"They've fired on the crowd!" she cried swiftly, with a catch of the breath. "It is true. It is your doing — yours!"

Vallier set the glass back on the sideboard before he said curtly:—

"What of it?"

A little blaze leapt into the girl's eyes. She stood looking him up and down.

"Only that you're a coward! Oh, I haven't believed it all this time, but I know now"—she flung at him—"I know now! You sit here and jest and pose for a brave man, and all the while you're afraid—afraid of those people out there in the street! The greater part of them are unarmed, and you know it. There are children in the crowd and women, and you set

your soldiers to fire on them and ride them down. My God!"

Her words cut into a quivering silence. Vallier set his teeth.

"Perhaps, when you have finished being dramatic—" he began.

But the girl was beyond his sneer.

"By Heaven, but I'll finish what I have to say to you; you shall stand there and hear me!" She took a step toward him. "I thought you had some rags of courage and honesty left, whatever else you were lacking in. I believed in you through and through, and I was the only one that did. Well, I was a fool! There wasn't a soul in the house, in the city, yesterday, that didn't know you for a coward except me. I believed in you. I said you would come. Yes, and you came; you came skulking by back-streets, like a common thief - you that pride yourself on your bravery! You were afraid to face the people, and so you crept in by the backdoor to your house. Your servant was a better man than you." Vallier moved sud-

denly. "Oh, I know everything! You were afraid to stir two inches in your house, among your own people, without your hand on a revolver. You thought no one knew of it. You were in a complete panic. The revolver was in your pocket all the while you were talking to Rainer, an unarmed man. You had him watched all the way down to the gates. Oh, you needn't have been so frightened—he's got a bigger soul than yours, for all he's a common insurgent! And to-day, this minute, for all your boasting, you're afraid of these people still! Perhaps it's the children you fear - the children and the old men and women! You won't feel safe till your soldiers have shot them down and trampled on them. Oh, it must be a proud thing to be as brave a man as you are!"

She came to a pause. It was as if the strength which had carried her unchecked through this outburst suddenly failed her. Her eyes were still on the President's face. Her hands groped for a chair-back, and clung to it.

"They are my people — my — people!" she said.

Of the three in the room, it was Severin who at that moment betrayed the greatest concern. He looked precisely like a man who has just experienced some profound upheaval of the elements. He simply stood rooted, waiting for Vallier's outbreak.

The President's words fell measuredly into a stillness where you might have heard a watch tick.

"You are singularly versatile in your enthusiasms — as in your morals," he said; "it appears to be a woman's privilege. Yesterday you couldn't say enough against the rabble; to-day, since your language has reverted to the gutter, it is only fair to conclude that your sympathies have done likewise."

He had chosen his words deliberately. He expected to see her flinch, but instead she continued to face him, slim, unshaken, her big eyes shining in her white face.

"Yes, my people!" she repeated pas-

sionately. "I was born of them, lived with them. I have their blood in my body. I belong to them—am of them! And how do you think I can stand here—watch—while—while—God would kill me where I stood!"

"Oh, I'm not going to dispute your claim," Vallier broke in crudely; "they're your people. Very well. Perhaps you'd like to go back to them this instant? You're proud of each other, I suppose? Go out there on the balcony and show yourself to them, and see how they'll receive you. Give them a chance; they'll welcome you with open arms, probably!"

Vanda looked at him like one in a dream. She began to move toward the screened window. Vallier's forced quietness left him abruptly. He sprang forward and caught her wrist, swinging her almost savagely back.

"Good God!" he cried, "are you mad?"

"Let me go!" she said, twisting her wrist from his grip—"let me go!"

"Let you go? I'll see you damned

first!" He laughed recklessly, and pushed her back toward the sofa. "You can save your theatricals, d'you see? And as for your people, it's a late day to talk about your duty to them — you that have tried to get away from them all these years, to forget them at every turn! You've hated the least thing that could remind you from where you've sprung. Couldn't I see it, haven't I known it, all this while — I that took you from the boards of a third-rate, barn-storming company, half bankrupt, and made you what you are?"

The girl looked at him with steady eyes. "Yes," she said in a dull, even voice, "you made me what I am; I—I have not forgotten it."

Vallier dropped her wrist and fell back. It was as if she had in that instant a new dignity that made her a stranger to him. He could talk, but his words would only recoil on himself. She was in the grip of a mystic force that removed her from him infinitely.

She stood looking out beyond him to the window. She was seeing all that her life had missed: all that she had thrust aside and trampled upon rose up and clung to her in this hour, and she could not put it away. The lives of those who had gone before her, dead hands reached from the past, were dragging her back across the intervening years. Her childhood spoke to her as coast-lights speak to travellers through the dusk. It was the race instinct holding her—the bond that first began to be forged when the earth was new. She could not put a name to it, but she knew now that it was the strongest bond in the world, the one enduring thing which mattered, which nothing could alter or break down. Simply she had for a little while forgotten it, but it had always been there. She had stood to fling jeers at her people in the moment of their triumph; in the moment of their defeat every nerve in her body swept to them passionately, and she knew that they hated her, despised her. She had made herself of her own free will

an outcast from them. Vallier's words rang in her ears, "Go back to them, then, and see how they'll receive you."

All at once her nerve broke. She flung herself on the sofa, her face hidden, her nails clenched into her palms. There was no dignity about her. She simply crouched there, her shoulders shaken with sobbing.

Someone came to the door. It was Brand.

" Mademoiselle will have coffee?"

"What?" said Vanda. "No, thank you."

The man faded obediently. She roused herself, sitting up with one hand on the sofa pillows, and pushed back the hair from her forehead. The room seemed very quiet. The square jade clock on the mantelpiece struck the half-hour, the single chime falling like a pebble into the empty stillness. It was half-past six.

She stood up dazedly and walked to the door. The air on the landing out-

side was heavy and moveless; the house seemed to drowse in the after-heat of the day.

Vanda paused for a moment, her hand on the carved post of the stair-rail. The place had for her the sudden unfamiliarity which only completely familiar surroundings can at times assume for us—a certain strangeness of attitude, the reflection, perhaps, of her own new sense of alienism. These everyday things which she had passed unnoticed a hundred times thrust themselves now insistently, almost violently, beneath her regard—the Venetian bowl of roses on a stand, the sweep of a palm-leaf across the motionless curtain. They had each a silent personality.

At the head of the stairs hung an etching of Millet's "Angelus." The light through a stained window fell diagonally upon the two strong, sober figures. Vanda's gaze rested upon these figures last, and for a little while dwelt there. For the first time in her knowledge of them they seemed to her symbolic. They represented the type,

strong, steadfast, unchanging — the children of the earth in all ages.

A door closed somewhere on the lower floor. She pulled herself together then a little wearily, and began resolutely to descend the soft-carpeted stairs.

CHAPTER XVI

"Look out for the top step," Carter said
— "there, where my foot is. Have you
got it?"

The girl followed him uncertainly up the narrow stairs, feeling her way by the baluster. When they were both inside the room he shut the door, and groped through his pockets for a match-box.

The gas, flaring suddenly, disclosed a disordered bureau and clothes flung promiscuously. There were some photographs in silver frames, and a hedge of invitation-cards were stuck around the frame of the looking-glass. Carter pushed the mosquito-curtains aside from the bed and sat down.

"There's a chair there," he said; "sit down. Now we'll hear about this business."

"There is nothing to tell you," Vanda said—"nothing. I simply left the Presidency because"—she paused a moment

— "it became impossible that I should stay there any longer," she finished then quietly.

"Great heavens!" said Carter.

He clasped his hands about his knee, staring at her in a profound amazement. Sitting there facing him in her soiled white gown, bareheaded, as she had run out from the house door, she achieved an absolute directness of which the most that could be said was that it annihilated, completely and without warning, all his previous theories concerning her. But if it was a time for dealing broadly with facts, he meant, at all events, to make sure of the facts themselves.

"You mean that you've — left there for good?" he bluntly asked.

"I — yes, for good," she echoed a little wearily.

"My God!" Carter's tone was purely reflective. He was trying to conceive the exact possible complication with Vallier that could have resulted in such a falling of the heavens. The girl's sleeve had

slipped a little back from her wrist, showing a dull, lozenge-shaped mark. Carter's glance became suddenly keen. "Did he—"

"No—oh, no!" She straightened herself, looking at him. "I had better tell you everything, just what happened," she said.

"Not unless you want."

He settled himself, nevertheless, to listen. She began from the moment he had parted with her at the Presidency gates, and told him everything exactly as it had occurred. Her voice was curiously even; throughout was no faltering, no attempt even at making her story dramatic. Her speech forgot to be effective; she might have been relating things which had happened a hundred years ago. Her hands lay locked in her lap; it struck Carter how she never once fidgeted with them.

"I belong to them," she said to him.

"I lived all my life among them when I was little. It all came back to me. What could I do? I belong to them." She paused, looking at him straightly. "I went out; no one stopped me. Severin

161

and—the President were shut up together talking. I went out into a side-street; it was empty. Farther on there was a man lying with his head in the gutter. They—someone had killed him. It was horrible; and I didn't notice which way I went after that—not until I met you."

When her voice had ceased Carter sat for a long while thinking. There was a silence, during which the little clock on the bureau ticked cheerfully. Presently Carter lifted his head, and their eyes met. He slid off the bed.

"I seem to have a peculiar faculty for running across you at opportune moments," he then said grimly. He walked to and fro, his hands in his trouser pockets. Vanda sat quietly. She seemed oddly unconcerned about herself. Her head rested a little back against the chair. Suddenly Carter whirled round upon her. "But, my Heaven! did you never stop to think? What did you suppose you were going to do if I hadn't come across you?"

"I don't know," she answered. "I don't

think it would have mattered very much. I couldn't have stayed there."

Carter sat down on the bed again. "Do you mind if I talk to you?" he simply said. He crossed his knee, nursing one ankle. "I couldn't have done it yesterday, but you were a different girl then altogether. I know you don't like me very well, and I presume you think I'm a regular kid and all that; but I'm not altogether. I guess on the question of age and a few other things you and I'd come out pretty even. All this don't signify. I'm not going to discuss motives or anything like that, but I think I understand pretty much the way you - you feel. I think you did the straight thing. In one way it was about the finest thing I guess you ever did in your life, but it was a silly thing all the same. What I'm thinking of is what you're going to do now." He stood up, looking at her. "You can't go out on the street again in that dress," he ultimately said.

She watched him move to the bureau. He knelt down before it, and began to pull

out the drawers. From them he took a clean négligé shirt and a college tie of striped silk. The bottom drawer stuck; as he jerked at it the movement dislodged a cotillon favour pinned to the mirror frame, and it fell against his bent head. He pushed the toy aside, rising to his feet. His gesture as he laid the things on the bed had in it a certain decisiveness.

"I want you to get into these, please," he said. "You don't mind? I've got a suit here somewhere . . . we're about the same size. I guess it'll fit you." He waited a moment. "I'm going to leave you now. I want to find out what we can best do for to-night. You'd better lock yourself in if you will. If anyone knocks you needn't answer; it would only be Heffernan, anyway. And if you take my advice, you'll just lie down on the bed there and get some rest till I come back; I may be gone three-quarters of an hour. I'm going to the Consul's." His hand was already on the door-handle. "Good-bye -for the present," he said.

Vanda stood up and held out her hand to him.

"Good night," she said; "and thank you, Mr. Carter."

It was the first word of thanks she had given him. Carter flushed.

"You'll be all right, then."

He gripped her hand for an instant, then the door closed behind him, and he heard the grating of the key in the lock.

It was rather more than three-quarters of an hour later when he returned. He touched the handle, and found that the door was unlocked. He opened it and went in. The room was empty and the gas turned low. On the bureau-top he caught sight of a leaf torn from one of his note-books. It was written upon in pencil.

"I want to thank you for taking trouble about me. Please don't think me ungrateful because I go like this. I have left my rings in your top drawer in front. The sapphire is my own. You will understand.

I would like you to keep this, please, because you have been a friend to me; the others will you do with as you think right? I shall not come back to claim them.

"Very sincerely yours,
"VANDA ROME."

CHAPTER XVII

Vanda stepped out into a world of black shadows and vivid white moonlight. She was in a back-street, which resembled a street in the drop-scene of a theatre. The house-fronts stood out like carved cardboard. It seemed as if the first breath of air could set wavering the balustrade of a balcony and prove it to be only painted canvas. The moon was poised above the roof-tops like a tissue-paper hoop in a circus-ring. In one of the shuttered houses a guitar was being played. The music floated out with soft distinctness on the air of the summer night.

The sound of horses' hoofs broke rhythmically upon the quiet. Even as Vanda paused to listen it became rapidly imminent. The next instant three horsemen swept around a corner into the white stillness of the little street. They jingled past at a sharp trot, which gave her, neverthe-

less, time to note the dust-grimed blue of the men's uniforms. One of the horses moved stumblingly; across one flank was a long scarlet gash, from which the torn skin hung in shreds. His rider continually jerked at the reins to keep him on his feet, swearing angrily. Their three black shadows bobbed before them in the moonlight. The trot quickened into the steady, swinging impact of a gallop. It faded gradually, beat by beat, and the street was again empty and peaceful.

Vanda pressed forward, carried by a sheer blind instinct of direction. She turned one corner after another heedlessly. She ran through narrow alleys where high, crazy, wooden houses peered down on her evilly. Everywhere had that air of strangeness which night lends to a place familiar. Here and there the streets were flung into trenches. She stumbled over unseen obstructions in the dark. Once, on a space of quiet pavement, she made a wide circuit to avoid a huddled figure on the bricks.

Presently she turned a corner, and was in a familiar thoroughfare.

An electric lamp made a pool of white light on the asphalt, in which black, netted shadows shrank and quivered. Telegraph wires tracked rope-like lines across the street. The light, filtering through the green tracery of a tree-branch, made of it a wonderful piece of jewel-work.

A little farther, beyond the glare of the arc-lamp, a barricade had been thrown across the way. Men surged struggling about it. They appeared to Vanda to be engaged in repulsing some unseen enemy lurking in the darkness beyond. Seeing only these bent watchful figures moving, striking, blindly resisting, she conceived an instant horror of this attacking power which was invisible. She could hear the mingled intent sound of blows and trampling, see the men's shoulders swaying to and fro. Musketry spluttered out of the blackness. She stood rooted to the pavement, within the magic peaceful circle of the electric lamp, watching.

Many times the barricade shook and quivered through its entire length. All at once was a sound of splintering wood. The men made a sudden, compact rush, and hurled themselves upon one end of it.

On a strange, new impulse, of a nameless anger and hatred, Vanda sprang forward and flung her slim body against the giving mass. It was as though a madness possessed her. She seized a piece of timber, bracing her feet upon the trampled débris, and pushed savagely to hold it back. The barricade gave a little—a little—first one way, then the other. A vast force out there in the darkness was pushing it slowly, surely. The wood creaked and grunted like a live thing under the conflicting pressure.

Vanda was being crushed and wedged against this moving wall. Her fingers clutched at it till the blood started from under her nails. Her teeth were locked together.

Next to her was a tall man in a torn shirt. His body was braced with the fine,

steel-like rigidity of an athlete. He kept shouting to the men at the farther end. When he slightly turned, she saw that his left arm hung useless at his side.

There was a swift shout. From the other side a man had leaped suddenly to the top of the barricade. Vanda recognised the light gray and yellow of the 4th Volunteer Regiment. The electric light gleamed on his silver shoulder-straps as he stood there a second, his head flung back, poised against the darkness. had a boyish, excited face. There was the flash of steel swung upward in the hand of one of the insurgents. She could see the sure, measured curve of the man's wrist. The blow caught the boyish soldier under the jaw, splitting through the bone, and he doubled quaintly, as though someone had caught at his ankles from behind.

There was a fresh shout and a rush. Men worked savagely, cursing, to push back the displaced barrier. The tall man next to Vanda turned, thrusting her to one side; she saw him close with a volunteer,

who was scrambling over, and bring him heavily to the ground.

Then, wonderfully, the thing was settled. There was a gathering thunder of hoofs upon asphalt, a jingling of steel. The barricade crumpled outward, like a child's bridge of blocks. The cavalry detachment surged over it compactly, hurtling, resistless, like the sweeping of a wave. There was no question of standing; the little handful of men were simply obliterated. One, dodging to reach the pavement where Vanda stood, stumbled. A horse swerved sideways, and she heard the dull, muffled thud of iron-shod hoofs upon a living body. The man seemed to be shuffled horribly this way and that under the moving feet, as in the clutch of machinery.

It all happened in a space of seconds. It had been simple, sure, unerring, like the action of mechanism. A moment later the detachment had vanished, jingling, into the further dusk, leaving behind them an empty street. The affair had been, after all, merely incidental.

One horse had broken its leg at the barricade. It was making grotesque efforts to rise; its front hoofs slipped and clattered on the asphalt, trying to find purchase.

The insurgent who had been ridden down near Vanda writhed himself on one elbow in vivid terror of the cavalry returning. His back had been injured, and he could move only from his shoulders, in a gesture which resembled oddly the scythelike sway of a snake about to strike. His clothes were thick with dust, and his face, uplifted from the asphalt, was simply a trampled smear of blood.

On the opposite side of the street a man was engaged in rising, very slowly and carefully, to his feet.

In the air hung the smell of spent powder, mingled with a fainter, more sickly odour. Vanda's nerves had been keyed to a pitch which, relaxed now abruptly, left her in a state almost dream-like. She was completely dazed. Dragged by an inevitable fascination, she moved inch by inch

nearer to the man stretched in the roadway, until she at last stood quite close, looking down at him. He was still now, lying half-way within the peaceful circle of the arc-lamp. The black netted treeshadows swam and quivered over his shirt, which clung wetly to his shoulders. The white, shrinking light seemed to quicken weirdly his upturned face. He was quite young. In his buttonhole, by strange freak unsoiled by the defacing hoofs, was the knotted white rag of the insurgent party. It fluttered like a tiny flag of truce.

With her eyes still fixed upon his face Vanda felt for her own buttonhole, and encountered there the knot of ribbon she had tied standing before Carter's looking-glass. Its touch gave her a mystic sense of companionship with this dead boy at her feet. She fingered it mechanically.

A little breeze swept up the street; it stirred the hair across her forehead. She was remotely conscious now of being hot and dirt-grimed and trembling weakly from head to foot.

Suddenly she heard a step behind her; someone had stepped softly forward and stood beside her, looking down at the twisted figure under the lamp. It was the tall man with whom she had striven shoulder to shoulder at the barricade. He was bareheaded. She turned her head now and saw for the first time his face.

It was Hilary Rainer.

CHAPTER XVIII

Carter laid a little roll of silver on the desk where Heffernan was seated. The editor lifted his head, glaring.

"What in the hell's that for?"

" You."

Carter seated himself on the edge of the desk.

"It's been a rotten funny show right through, hasn't it?" he said.

"Tell you one thing for the good of your soul—I take back all I ever said about Vallier. A man who can simply ride out unarmed into the middle of a mob and just twist 'em round his finger the way he did is a man worth knowing."

"That is an instance of the amazing unexpectedness of him." Heffernan swung round on the chair, pushing his work to one side. "Here is a man capable of behaving upon occasion precisely like a fool

and a coward. We dislike him, despise him, lose faith in him; then one day in a crisis he does a thing like this. What is there to say? We instantly forget that he ever did resemble a fool and coward."

"Oh, I take it back!" Carter repeated—
"I take it back! He is from any point of view incomprehensible. But you can't help liking him; that's the trouble. I protest against being made to like people I disapprove of."

"There is a curious streak of genius in Vallier," said Heffernan, musingly. "His recklessness carries him through situations where another man's calculation would be worth a row of pins; and he knows his crowd backward. Morals don't appeal to them, principles don't appeal to them; but they turn instinctively to the picturesque. Now, Vallier is nothing if not dramatic; there's where he has the grip of them. Rainer made the primary mistake of appealing to their principles, their sense of justice. Beyond a certain point he failed. Naturally; you can't continually appeal

1**7**7

successfully to a quality which doesn't exist. Vallier steps in at the last minute and appeals to their imagination, and the trick's done."

"I don't admit," Carter argued, "that a man has any business to sit still and watch a situation crumbling just for the artistic satisfaction of stepping in at the last minute and saving it. The thing's immoral. It isn't even improved by the fact of Vallier possessing a sense of humour."

"Rainer," said Heffernan, slowly, "is a good man wasted. He was unfortunate in being in earnest. That is the one thing which these people fail utterly to comprehend; they were never quite at one with him. A good man can reign here for a little while, but it takes a thoroughly bad man to be permanently popular."

Carter began angrily: —

" Oh — "

"We'll go out and get a drink," then said Heffernan the unemotional, pushing back his chair.

They crossed the square under blinding 178



noon sunlight. Dust stirred along the asphalt. On a corner a broken plate-glass window had been newly boarded up; the white, clean wood glared obtrusively. The city was amazing in its easy reassertion of everyday business. A darkey in a Panama hat was selling bananas from a cart in the street.

The two men found a saloon and turned in. It was a saloon habitually patronised by Heffernan as possessing the only cash register in the town. Lounging sidewise, with their elbows on the bar, they could command through the open door a little framed vista of the street outside.

"Rainer hasn't been seen since Tuesday," Carter said. "It wasn't the cavalry killed his last chance with the people, it was Vallier's speech. He clung to it till then. I heard he was killed getting away. I don't believe it."

"He has been killed eleven different times, in eleven different parts of the city," Heffernan returned; "in the end he'll probably get away. We may hear more

of him or we may not. These men—sometimes the thing gets into their blood. They try it again in another quarter for another cause. But I don't think Rainer's like that. He is more likely to disappear to all intents and purposes off the face of the earth."

"I hope he does," said Carter, thinking. There was a leisured clinking of hoofs on asphalt, and a patrol of the city guards swept by. Under their broad sombreros the men's faces, bronzed and hot, showed merely a bored indifference. They stared casually from side to side. The small lean dust-coloured horses stepped out unhurriedly to the jingling of their trappings. The sunlight accentuated the shabby leather and smooth-worn brass. horse, sorrel, with a white nose, had a fetlock bound round with a dingy-coloured handkerchief. This was no show outfit; they were simply businesslike, and consequently unimpressive. The scuffed dust got into the horses' eyes, making them blink wisely. Heffernan finished his

whisky and started for the door. Round the corner the little cavalcade passed out of view.

"Got a match?" he asked when Carter overtook him.

"Sure." He waited. Carter was feeling through his pockets one by one. "Funny," he ultimately said; "I must have lost it."

- "What?"
- " My match-box," said Carter.

CHAPTER XIX

HILARY the dreamer lay with Vanda in the corn-fields, while down in the city a price was set upon his head.

He had failed after all—failed ingloriously. His was the lowered banner, the broken dream.

He had built and hoped and laboured, and in the end it had come to this: her hand in his in the summer corn-field, and above them the blue sky.

At the end, nothing matters.

They were upon rising ground. Whitening in the heat, the yellow, rustling sea swept away from them on either side. Far down on the level land lay the city they had quitted, small and peaceful and remote through the blue hazy air. To the left, beyond the corn, was a triangle of blue sea, with the sun upon it. A dot of dull gray marred in one place the

skyline; it was the Spanish gun-boat anchored outside Marainz Harbour.

"Do you remember," said Vanda, "when we were very little we walked through my father's corn-field at harvest, and the corn met over our heads? Ah, Hilary, why does one ever grow up?"

"You would have the old days back, dear?" he asked.

"Those days — just those days, without the time between. Not if it meant knowing what was to come."

"Whatever has been was good," he answered soberly, "since it led to this. I like to think that somewhere God will give us back the yesterdays. We shall do better with them then."

Her big eyes looked out across the stirring corn-tops dreamily.

"All the years we have spoiled," she slowly said — "all the old broken days.... Hilary, if I believed that —"

Her voice paused.

"Dear," he said.

But she laid her head, with a wonderful

little tired gesture, closer against his knee.

"Why should we talk here?" she said. "Words are useless things after all. . . ."

Around them was the fine stretched silence of noon. They could hear the breeze walking softly in the dried stems, a tiny, multitudinous sound like the stirring and stretching and creeping of an unseen army. Once a mouse, one of the small, watchful field-dwellers, ran out a little way from the sheltering stalks and stood to peer at them, wrinkling his nose delicately up and down. Somewhere a bird was drowsily chirping.

"You were never very far from me all this while," Hilary presently said. "Even when I did not always know it you were there. There is not a step of your life I have not known since the day you went away. I was there in the theatre the night you made your first success; it was I wrote up the notice for the *Herald* the next day. A hundred times, in the street, you've passed me by and never known it.

We've kept side by side, in a way, since the time we were two barefooted children in the village. Life plays strange tricks with us. There is a bend in the road just outside the city, where I could see your villa lights through the trees. I used to walk up there in the evenings and stand. It was like saying good night to you. Do you remember a night when you drove back in the dark, and your horse stumbled on a loose stone? There was a man helped the driver to get him up. It was I."

"Oh, Hilary!" she cried, catching her breath as in pain—"Hilary!"

"What does it matter?" he said; "everything is past. The years are nothing. We can put them aside and begin again. We will build our house afresh, dear, and build it better."

"And it has always been just you and I," she said, wondering, "even when we never knew it?"

"Always," he said.

They had planned to reach the sea-

coast that day. There Rainer had friends. They would board a sailing-vessel under cover of the darkness. But the last few days had told upon Vanda's strength; she could only walk slowly. She tired very soon, even with Hilary's hand to help her.

When he spoke to her anxiously, her white face smiled bravely back at him. Once he tried to carry her. But his own strength had weakened, walking without food under the burning sun.

Dusk found them not much farther on their road.

There was a storm that evening. They had found shelter in an empty outhouse, and they watched it loom up, black against the blood-red of the sunset. The lightning was like God's sword in the sky. Soon the thunder broke — great, quivering crashes that shook the earth.

Vanda clung to him, rigid and trembling. The lightning showed him her strained face, her eyes wide with fear. Her fingers tightened upon his at each peal.

"It is my punishment, Hilary!" she

cried. "God will never let us live. It is His judgment upon us both for all that I have been!"

He held her close to him, her face hidden against his shoulder. The storm lasted till nearly midnight.

"Hilary," she asked once in a small voice, "do you believe there is a hell?"

His arms tightened about her, in the darkness.

"No, dear," he lied with a great gladness.

Gradually the storm passed over. The lightning grew less vivid. Outside could be heard the steady, scythe-like sweep of the rain on the ruined corn-fields.

"I am so tired," said Vanda, presently—"so tired. . . . To-morrow morning I shall be all right. We will reach the coast to-morrow?"

"To-morrow, dear," he said.

He was glad that she could not see his face.

Long after she had fallen asleep he sat there beside her watching. She lay with

one hand under her face, an old-remembered trick of childhood. The short, yellow hair was tossed back from her forehead; her slim, worn-out body, in the loose-fitting man's clothes, was stretched upon the floor in the perfect relaxation of slumber. There was a little flush on her cheek. It brought back to Hilary, across the years, a vision of her as he had so often seen her stretched in the play-wearied sleep of childhood, barefooted, in her torn cotton frock. A great tenderness grew up in his heart, looking, until past and present became to him one; and he saw her, through a mist, as in truth the same child he had lost long ago, himself a child, and had more bitterly lost again, older grown, and had only found, at last, in the losing of all else that the world held for him. bent forward and touched softly her curved hand. She stirred a little, half opening her eyes.

Out in the east the day was already breaking—the day which was to begin for them their new life together.

CHAPTER XX

THE morning dawned clear and luminous after the storm. An early golden haze was over the country, under which objects distant assumed a soft distinctness. The wet-flattened corn-fields took the sunlight in a broad sheen. Great flowers, scarlet and blue and white, lifted quiet serene faces to the morning air. Insects were droning and rasping among the drenched weeds. Later it would be very hot.

Vanda's terror of the night before had left her. She was light-hearted, hopeful, wonderfully her accustomed self — more wonderfully still to Hilary his unshadowed love of the old days. It was as if they had left behind, in the little, sun-drowsy city below, all that the years had marred.

The sun was in their faces as they walked. Dew, brushed from the grass-tops, lay in great shining drops upon the dust of the path.

"How we shall always remember this walk!" Vanda said. "It will seem so strange to us, looking back."

"We will live somewhere outside the city," she told him later. "What does the name matter? In any country there will be blue skies and clean sunshine and green growing things around. I want to forget city sights, city sounds. Anywhere will be God's country so long as we are together."

Hilary looked out across the fair land before them.

"The rain is past, the winter is over and gone; arise, my beloved, and come. . . ."

* * * * *

Imperceptibly the dew dried off the plants by the wayside. The haze dissolved, and the blue shadows of stones on the road shortened. Vanda's steps lagged a little; once she stumbled. Hilary's arm was about her.

"It is all right," she smiled — "all right!"

"We will rest a little," he said.

But she shook her head. She would

not let him help her. From time to time he looked down at her face, which she kept hid from him, with a great pain at his heart. It hurt him to see her drag her feet through the choking dust.

By noon they were at the top of a little shadeless cart-road which wound downward between fences, white and glaring. On the left lay a stretch of scorched pasture, and beyond a belt of trees standing out in a ridge against the blue metallic sky.

From somewhere near at hand came the arid shrilling of a cicala. Looking forward, Hilary saw at the foot of the road a knot of mounted men. They were in gray; the sun flamed on a silver badge set in their broad-brimmed hats.

Vanda saw them as soon as he did. She did not cry out; only her hand sought his arm and clung to it tightly.

For him there was a long moment while the world stood still. One horseman rode out a little in advance of the others. He took time to note dully the gray and silver facings on the man's uniform, the slant of

his balanced carbine across the saddle, the forward attentive prick of the horse's ears; then his eyes swept desperately to the little belt of trees beyond the pasture.

"Can you do it, dear?" he asked.

But it were as if a hand were laid on his heart as he spoke. What was the use? He knew it was no use as he said it. She was swaying a little where she stood; her eyes shone back at him pitifully out of her white, tired face. She gave him a push from her.

"Go, Hilary!" she cried; "there will be time. Go! I—I can't!"

He looked back at her, all he could see, while the country turned about him.

"It would be no use," he then said quietly.

It was simple now that it had come — so simple.

"It is my fault, Hilary," she said — "my fault. God has meant this all along. He would never have let us be happy together — never! Hilary, can you — love me?"

He put his arms about her and kissed

her twice on the mouth. Her face looked to him so brave, so childish. For a moment she clung to him; then he put her hands from his neck, gently.

"They will not hurt you, dear," he said.
"I will go down to them—tell them.
Perhaps—"

* * * * *

She stood to watch him down the little slope of hot road between the fences. He moved uncertainly, like a man who has just risen from a long illness. He was bareheaded; she could see the swing of his shoulders under the sun-faded shirt. Once his foot moved a loose stone in the path and set it rolling.

He went straight forward without turning his head. When he was nearly at the bottom a little white flash jumped out in front of him, vivid against the sunlight. He stumbled, set one foot gropingly before the other, and stumbled again; then he pitched forward, with one arm doubled under him, face downwards in the road. A little snake-like trickle of blood came from

193

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his mouth and began to worm its way busily through the white, thick dust.

When the soldiers rode forward toward the other man left at the top of the slope, they saw that he was standing there quite still, waiting for them.

CHAPTER XXI

Carter was worried because the waiter appeared to have been suddenly plunged into a supreme forgetfulness of his commands. He twisted in his chair to follow better the distant manœuvres of the man's white linen jacket. In the midst of his annoyance a straw-hatted passer-by, catching sight of him, picked a way between the forest of tables and smote him abruptly on the back. Carter turned with a jerk.

"Well, I'm blowed! Who brought you here and lost you, Tommy?"

"Rude, isn't he?" said the stranger. He shook hands with Heffernan.

The party made place for him joyously. Carter had forgotten the defaulting waiter.

"Allow me," he cried, waving his hand, "to introduce to you Mr. T. Hollendorf, special correspondent. You will observe that he arrives blandly upon the scene

after everything's over, and states that he came to correspond. My Heaven! Sit down, Tommy, and make yourself at home!"

The others proceeded to overwhelm him.

"How long have you been here? Which way did you come?"

"Let me tell you," began Carter, solemnly, "the very latest news: there's been an insurrection—"

His companions howled him down. The waiter brought a tray filled with little conical glasses, and clinked them down with a great parade of haste.

"So the Consul grows roses still?" said Hollendorf, presently. "I must go and look him up. And Stuggers? I always liked Stuggers."

"Stuggers remains a fixture, immutable—a rock against which waves break impotently. Say, you don't know all the news yet. What do you think of Heff? He swears he's going to sell out and retire."

- "He going to grow roses?"
- "No; mint-juleps!"
- "I've contemplated it," said Heffernan; "but I don't know now. These revolutions, you know they get so bloomin' monotonous after a bit!"

"Listen to him; it's indigestion!" said someone. "Heffernan is getting old and fat. I've noticed it this long while, though I've felt a delicacy about mentioning it."

The Irishman smiled good-humouredly. . Carter and Hollendorf found themselves talking together.

"So you missed the best part," Carter said. "How rotten! If you'd seen the streets here just a few days back! Well, I won't forget it in a hurry."

"Oh, I've picked up a few odds and ends," the correspondent returned, "here and there. I was there yesterday when they brought one of the insurgents in—chap they'd collared when they found Rainer. Quite young he was; and talk about obstinate — obstinate as the devil—as the very devil! He wouldn't so much

as open his mouth to anyone. Wonderful how stolid these country chaps are! They'd tightened up on the cord round his wrists till it must have been giving him hell—simply hell—but he never once let on. Stolid as blazes!"

"This whisky's rotten!" said Carter—
"rotten! Go on!"

"Oh, I was going to say they went through this chap's pockets, of course, and there wasn't anything at all but just a match-box. It struck me so funny, his hanging on to a match-box. He wouldn't tell us any name; but, oddly enough, the initials on this were just the same as yours. Coincidence, eh? I got the officer to give it to me for a memento. Here. See?"

He spun a little vesta-box across the table. It was of shabby gun-metal. Carter took it up mechanically, and turned it over in his hand. Upon one side were in gold the initials "E. C."

His limbs turned of a sudden cold, then hot. He rose unsteadily, pushing back his chair.

"What's the matter?" Hollendorf said. Carter pulled himself together, smiling mirthlessly.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "Only—you see . . . it is mine, you know."

He turned, and his chair scraped on the floor. Hollendorf leaned back, and watched him edge away hurriedly between the white-covered tables to the open sidewalk.

"Well, I'm damned!" he said.

CHAPTER XXII

UNDER the steady impact of the horse's hoofs the solid macadam seemed to rise and fall rhythmically. Trees cast on either side a hot, blue line of shadow. Very far in the distance was a square white building walled about, with small black eyes which inscrutably watched.

The reins tugged through Carter's fingers as the big horse stretched his neck. Once an open carriage rolled by, going toward the town. It held a woman, leaning back under a fluffy sunshade. On the instant it brought to Carter vividly that other stretch of dusty road outside the city, and a certain carriage drawn by a high-stepping gray horse. He could almost hear again the rustle of Vanda's white frock, see the cactus-blossom set in her belt. Her face was before him, wilful, exquisite, determined, framed by the fash-

ionable summer hat. Seven days ago, and it seemed a year!

He looked at Severin. The officer's face was hot and anxious, and the hair clung in wisps to his damp forehead. Almost as if he interpreted Carter's glance he said:—

"Oh, we shall do it! There's time yet. It's only twenty minutes."

He spoke with an assumption of easiness, his eyes riveted upon the grim white building in front of them. Streaks of lather began to show on the horse's satin shoulders.

But at last Severin pulled his beast to a walk, and they turned in through big iron gates to a quiet courtyard. To Carter then, dismounting, the level ground seemed for a moment unstable. He left the horse standing there, breathing heavily, and followed Severin through a cool-flagged corridor lined with interminable whitewashed walls. Once, a half-opened door disclosed a quiet, uniformed man seated at a table writing.

Severin's spurs clanked on the uneven flooring, worn into hollows by the passing of so many feet. He hurried with the impatience of a man threading an accustomed maze. Carter followed breathlessly on his heels.

Suddenly they turned a final corner, and before them was a square doorway, opening upon another courtyard a little larger than the first. It had high, expressionless, white-plastered walls. On the cobblestones some pigeons sidled busily to and fro, iridescent in the sunlight, picking up stray grains.

But Carter's gaze swept across the peaceful space of stones, beyond the drawn-up file of men in gray, to the one slim, boyish figure standing out there in the sunshine against the glare of plastered wall. He knew below the bandage the lift of the chin, the straight line of throat from the open shirt-collar. A serene order fell on the silence, followed by a familiar rattle. He saw Severin dash forward shouting. There was a jumping flash of flame, and

against the precise splintering crack of the volley Carter heard his own voice crying uselessly, "My God — don't!"

The smoke cleared away, drifting sideways. She had fallen a little forward, a huddled heap on the sun-flooded stones. The knot of the bandage had slipped, and the short, yellow hair ruffled out above it. One hand was clenched. She had at last met her freedom quietly here where so many of her race had met it before.

Carter moved forward with Severin across the courtyard, and at each step the ground rose up and hit his feet. Another man was before them hurrying from an opposite doorway, and in the dazedness of the moment Carter forgot to wonder that it should be, at this eleventh hour, the President.

The soldiers had fallen back; there were left facing each other in the silence only these three—and the fourth.

Vallier stooped upon one knee on the stones and gathered the limp, defaced body into his arms carefully, as he might

203

have lifted a child. His mouth was set tightly.

There was a flapping of wings. The pigeons, momentarily disturbed, had settled back again. Their little pink toes scuttled to and fro with a watchful daintiness. There leapt into Carter's mind things that he meant to say to Vallier now if he never said anything again. His speech was ready-made on his lips. It should be the truth for once.

Up to the final instant of Vallier's rising he believed that he would say it. But he saw only the man's face as he turned, and the speech slipped shamefacedly from his mind. His fine resolutions were as chaff. In the end he could simply stand there bareheaded, suddenly awkward, while Vallier passed close by him.

He strode with his burden across the quiet, sunlit courtyard, tall and straight-built, and the men silently made way for him. His broad shoulders seemed to fill the doorway; he had to bend his head as he went in.

The pigeons, completely reassured, seemed to prance in their continuous sidelong movements. Their feathers glistened sleekly. Carter took out a handkerchief, and mechanically began to wipe from his forehead the dust and sweat of the ride. He looked at the pigeons and the high, white walls, and at Severin, standing uncertainly a few paces off. He cleared his throat slowly.

"You see," he began in a commonplace voice, "after all it was twenty-one minutes . . . twenty-one. . . ."

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